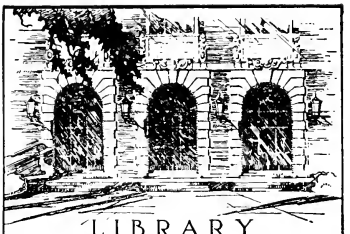
THE LAST OF THE CORNETS

COLONEL ROWAN HAMILTON



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Autumn

THE LAST OF THE CORNETS.

THE
LAST OF THE CORNETS.

A NOVEL.

BY

COLONEL ROWAN HAMILTON.

"What is fame to him that founders struggling with a quicksand chance;
What is all the gold that glitters to the fool of circumstance?
Round him rush the eddying waters, on his face the sea winds play,
And afar on roseate summits melts the solitary day."—F. W. MYERS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
F. V. WHITE & CO.,
31 SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1890.

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ERRATA.—VOL. I.

Page 66, line 6, *for* Roderick *read* Randolph.

Page 95, line 16, *for* colours *read* standard.

Page 160, line 18, *for* provo *read* provo'.

THE

LAST OF THE CORNETS.

CHAPTER I.

"Read his destinies
In the full brow o'erarching kingly eyes,
In the strong hands grasping both rein and sword."

Even after many years, I cannot recall, the scenes I wish to depict, or gather the scattered threads of the brief memoir I am putting together, without much regret on my part for to me an irreparable loss and sore disappointment at the recollection of a life that was literally thrown away. I may have overrated the last of

the Cornets,* Allan MacDonagh ; perhaps I did, but I still believe he was above the average of men for good, and that, under other circumstances, his ability, his courage, his Quixotic perception of what was honourable and just, would have enabled him to distinguish himself.

That everything comes to those that wait is but a half truth. In soldiering, as in other professions, success may—I say it advisedly—may attend conscientious work, in conjunction with ability; some attain it, others—equally deserving—plod on in an uneventful groove, unrewarded by it, till the curtain falls upon their earthly drama. There are those, too, who

* The titles of Cornet and Ensign were abolished in 1871, and the meaner designations of second or sub-lieutenant substituted for them, with what object no one has ever yet been able to explain satisfactorily.

find themselves enmeshed in the web of untoward circumstances — partly, be it granted, from faults and follies of their own—out of which there can be no rising upwards and onwards.

But it does sometimes happen that, early in his career, to the young soldier is given the opportunity for distinction, when command and responsibility are suddenly thrust upon him.

Once or twice in a generation, within the trenches of a Rorke's Drift, the blood-stained messenger of life and death calls forth in the breast of the young commander the genius of resource, the frantic resistance, "when all the corpse-piled plain is pale with death," that proves his innate greatness, and makes him live in history. Be this as it may, chance, fate,

and circumstances are the largest factors in our lives. Inherited wealth, the school he was at, the friend he made at the outset of his career, have contributed to make that man a Cabinet Minister, and that man an eminent General. Doubtless they have had the opportunity given them, and they "knew to take occasion by the hand."

Let me then describe my boy, as I knew him when he joined the Dragoons. My boy! I still love to call him my boy; and, indeed, to me, who had neither kith nor kin worth naming, he was that, and perhaps more endeared to me than are many sons or daughters to their parents.

Allan MacDonagh was tall, and of a well-knit figure, yet fell something short of the heroic standard of six feet high in his stocking-soles; nor was he, strictly

speaking, handsome—not according to the orthodox standard of beauty, certainly not as you saw his features in repose, nor as he stood before you in profile. His nose, you would say, was short and thick, the nostrils a bit too wide, and the cheek-bones a fault too high; but the hand of no ordinary painter could have limned the proud outline of his short upper-lip, till now hardly darkened by the shadow that proclaimed his manhood; for him no camera could have given back or reproduced the sunny smile of gladness which in those days used to suffuse his face, not otherwise than when the sunbeams strike upon the ripples of the pool.

His crisp brown hair lay curled "about his temples like a god's," and underneath straight brows, the honest grey-blue eyes

looked fearlessly upon you, and held, or seemed to hold, you while he spoke. Was it from their strong magnetic influence, or that unconsciously it was pleasure to return their gaze? But it was by his gait, his manner, the toss of his head, and the quick gesture while he spoke, that he revealed the restlessness which pervaded his character; and this, too, you saw in the nervous clenching of his shapely hand.

Words are misleading, and I had not thus mentally pictured him; for, dining out at a neighbouring country house, I had come across a fellow-student of his at Oxford, and had naturally proceeded to draw him on the subject of Allan MacDonagh, then recently gazetted to the old "Black Horse," as it was generally designated in the service.

I imagined a fair and ordinary-looking youth, overdressed (he did always dress but in the best of taste), and in whom "the House" had fostered self-sufficiency which it would take some months of riding-school, weary days with the belt on as orderly officer, and much general sitting upon to take out of him. I gathered he had been a sap at Eton, and did most things fairly. "I could never get him to train," said my friend, an enthusiastic boating man. "Just as I thought I had him in my toils, and was about to make an excellent oar of him, he was on for something else, reading for honours, or hunting with the Heythorp, and dining at the good old Mitre afterwards. He seemed to have lots of friends in all the different sets, and he never

seemed to care whether his temporary devotion to science or sport was successful or not. *Camaraderie esprit de corps* he had, but what corresponds to it personally (is it a phase of selfishness?) he had not.

It is not of material consequence to this story that I should give a description of myself, or wear "my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at," but in these days, when nothing is sacred to that chartered libertine of society, the modern interviewer, from the colour of a man's hair to his appetite, and how it is appeased, from the number of hours he sleeps, and what he sleeps in, to his opinions on the deepest subjects of theology, the general reader may ask to be informed of some further particulars of

my life than those he may glean from this memoir during its progress. And at this date, as I, John Merrilis, sit in my favourite arm-chair in my favourite club, and chew the cud of sweet and bitter, I must admit that Time is laying his hand heavily upon me. But the aforesaid interviewer, if favourably inclined, would describe me as about fifty-five years old, and as an average specimen of the class that haunts the military clubs. He would state that my own grey hairs, etc., no longer "clustered"—I would not let it if it could (as we advance in life our hair is better short; let us be thankful if we retain it). He would describe me as considerably above the average height, and proportionately under the average weight, giving the amount in pounds; of

my features and face, a favourable interviewer, recollect, would say that I had dark brown reflective eyes, a large and slightly aquiline nose, a kindly mouth, and a clear cut chin, clean shaved, and surmounted by a dark and well-waxed moustache, which divided the two lower provinces of the face. Burns must have referred more especially to the moral characteristics when he uttered his well-worn prayer, "To see ourselves as others see us." But many a man has been startled by the close proximity of what he imagined for a second to be a stranger, when he has caught for the first time some unfamiliar view of himself in some extraordinary side reflector at a tailor's shop, and I am told that people very frequently do not recognise their own

voices in that wonderful invention of modern times, the phonograph.

But let us suppose, the interviewer dismissed, he has left me my recollections intact, he has not discovered my ardent and lifelong attachment to the violin, nor did I admit to him my extravagant taste for books, of which I am an omnivorous reader, devouring or testing everything between Macaulay and Mark Twain. I have had other tastes and other occupations; the facts and fancies connected with them are not dead, but live as I ruminate in this old arm-chair. Ill health, want of means, want of energy and what not, conspire to prevent my entering the active lists again. Nevertheless, my faithful valet still preserves my pink in lavender, or maybe camphor,

and my boots and breeches in the temperature best suited to their requirements. He lays the flattering unction to his soul that I shall want them again some day. I don't. The breechloaders have been thrown aside; there remains to me, however, that king of sports, the catching of the "saumon fish," and golf, that "last infirmity of noble minds."

My infantry and cavalry swords (I served in the Mutiny with the Welsh Fusiliers) hang crossed above the photos and pipes that adorn the chimney-piece of my chambers in Half Moon Street; whilst, surrounded by small mementos of the service, the badge of the Fusiliers, the eagle of the 87th, the castle of the Inniskilling Dragoons, there stands on my writing-table, in its velvet frame, a

speaking likeness of her who was the well-beloved of my youth, the glory and idol of my manhood, and whose sacred presence, enshrined within my heart, no second loved one shall usurp in my declining years.

CHAPTER II.

"Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field."

ALLAN had joined at Barchester in September, a few days before the regiment left for Hilltown, on the east coast; and I, not having had any leave since the old corps returned from India, had managed to combine first leave with an extra six weeks, commencing that month, so as to do a bit of mountaineering in Switzerland before the cold weather set in, and did not therefore make his acquaintance till the end of December that year. Allan was obliged to make the aforesaid exchange of quarters—"March by rail dis-

mounted," as he described it, with the hospital contingent — the women and children, the sick horses, the guard-room prisoners, and the mess baggage—at parliamentary rate and pace, too, stopping at every station, his sole companion in arms being a somewhat senior and grumpy lieutenant, of a taciturn frame of mind, and who hustled him out at every station as if he were a field officer, or at the least a captain, with messages to that station-master, or an order to that sergeant.

"But I had my pull of you all at Hill-town," he rejoined. "I put on a lot of side at the head inn for a couple of days, escorted the brave troop to the Cathedral, took stock of all the expectant damosels inside, guessed at which were the best worth cultivating, and classed the

heavy fathers into those who had a forbidding aspect, and those who looked like dinners and shooting."

The Cornet had not been long in harness before Teddy Burton took him in hand, initiated him into the mystery of getting leave from Friday till Monday—even while going through the "school," and not dismissed his drills; insisted on his making Limmers' his pot-house in town, vice Rawlings', which had been his hotel hitherto; had a high trial with him at the pigeons, procured by Mat O'Halloran, and pronounced him "good enough for Hurlingham;" advised him about his horses and his trap; and, at the end of a month, had him fit to drive the regimental coach down the crowded Queen's Parade of an afternoon. So, when I

joined, on 30th December, I found him "formed," as Peter Godsall, commonly called the Squire, termed it, and "going strong on the bit;" and, as he knocked at my quarters and marched in boldly with a military salute and a quiet smile on his face, as if he thought the ceremony rather superfluous, and, as orderly officer, handed me an official document which concerned me—for, at the moment I was the senior officer in barracks—I reckoned him up and down, and came to the conclusion that, in appearance at any rate, he would do. After a quasi-official introduction had followed, I insisted on his sitting down and narrating, for my benefit, his military experiences hitherto. In the conversation that ensued, I gathered that he had already had a try at most things

—a few days' hunting on the Saturdays, his only holidays, alternated by a run up to town with Burton, and a dinner at Limmers', with a theatre afterwards. He hoped, by the way, that that celebrated hostelry was my own also; and as he left the room we had so far advanced—at least I had, in his good graces — that he was good enough to offer to take me, with the Squire and himself, to a country-house dance on the 31st—this, however, with the utmost deference due to seniority and rank; and so I was to enter Hilltown society under the wing and vouched for by my own Cornet.

The 30th was always a great night with us, for, by an old regimental custom, introduced in former days, it was ordained that all the officers should dine together that evening. On that day first leave was

held to terminate, and not till after muster parade, 31st, was second leave allowed to commence. The originator of this innovation laid it down that it was most desirable that the officers should, if not elsewhere, at least meet for some hours together in barracks, when all affairs connected with the corps could more easily be arranged and debated on.

This idea was quite congenial to the views of the then commanding officer, and he was rigid in the carrying out thereof, except in the special cases when leave had been granted right into January. Imagine therefore that on this occasion, out of two-and-thirty officers chronicled in the army list as presumably present at headquarters, there being no detachments out, about seven-and-twenty would sit down to dinner. And what a

coup d'œil the scene presents. The white expanse of damask is set with regimental cups, and glass ; and flowers and gleaming silver contrast with the uniforms of the dragoons, to-night an unbroken border of scarlet round the table ; and while the band discourses the softer music of Gounod, or in louder notes more martial strains, high spirits not unmixed with banter prevail, and questions regarding leave to be, or already enjoyed, are rapidly interchanged ; the latest regimental story or good thing is passed about for the delectation of those who have just come back, while they, in return, throw into the conversation their experiences on the Continent, or the record of a country-house visit, where "they do you about the best."

The promise and proclivities of the new

Cornets are bracketed with those of the new horses and chargers. Presently, however, the conversation drifts into the usual channels, and differs little from what you might hear at the London clubs or a country dinner-party. But, readers, this is not a typical night, but the night of nights in the regiment; and, after the "Queen" has been drunk, the "Black Horse," coupled with the name of Lord Ligionier, is always toasted. To-morrow, out of a possible remainder of thirteen or fourteen, the table will most likely be laid for nine, two of whom will have forgotten to "warn out;" and, of the remaining seven, one will be "a little late," and come in with the cutlets and profuse apologies to the mess president. The dinner, moreover, like Jawleyford's cele-

brated feasts, will show a diminished number of lights, and a lower scale of entertainment; and, alas, there will be no band! Not a few things that are bright and pleasant end in smoke—a mess dinner always; and the lighting of cigarettes, and the production of cigar cases (who ever allowed that the cigars in his mess or his club, with the exception, perhaps, of one out of four or five brands, are as good as those he selects and buys himself?) now betokens the beginning of the end. Gradually the sitters break up into groups; the majority make their way into the ante-room, a few disappear to their quarters—there making final arrangements for their departure on the morrow,—while a small but senior party is left chatting, with just one more bottle of champagne and second cigars.

CHAPTER III.

"Come saddle my horses, come call up my men."

The 31st is muster-day, and it is as equally obligatory upon the officers to attend it as the parade at mess the previous evening. Therefore, at 10 A.M., on the great plain that stretched away from the barracks right on to the Downs proper, the corps is drawn up in "watering order," and stand in column of troops, but in single rank. Upon the right flank are the dismounted men; on the left, the band, with their instruments; and these are quickly dismissed after the roll-call has been read and answered to. The men and horses

now, by order, file past the colonel and officers, who stand in a group together—the colonel occasionally questioning the captain or lieutenant of the troop, as they pass him in review. Last come the remounts of this and the preceding year, each carefully led by a dismounted dragoon; and, last of all, when these have been inspected, and praised or condemned, the officers' chargers, each ridden by a trooper bold, are brought upon the scene. A more careful scrutiny is here demanded, and they are ordered to walk, trot, and canter successively in a circle round the colonel and his staff of officers, who, while they hazard no remark aloud, do not forbear to draw the attention of one another to the fact that Johnston's charger must have been down, or fail to observe, with a smile, that surely

(for they are very human) Harrington's mare is trotting lame.

After that short parade was over, a rumour gained ground that Davidson had heard, from a friend at Court that morning, that we should probably be moved before the leave season was over, on account of another cavalry regiment being required in Ireland, and its being necessary to repair the Sheffield Barracks; and the *pros* and *cons* of this intelligence were discussed about the mess quarters before the stable trumpets sounded—viz., whether we were most likely to go north, and thence to Ireland—avoiding Aldershot altogether that "turn;" and whether, if we went north, we would follow the Lancers to York and Manchester, or the Greys to Leeds and Edinburgh; or, going south, whether we

should relieve the Hussars at Shorncliffe, or the Bays at Brighton; and if so, where the Aldershot year would come in; one thing, at any rate, was certain, and this was dwelt upon, that those who were just starting had better not go away very far, as they were sure to be recalled. This prophecy was, however, a false one. At stables I found the Cornet; and, as he handed me the morning state, with his usual very military salute, and, by invitation, paced with me the very narrow causeway that lay between the two black rows of a portion of Her Majesty's stud, he volunteered to me the virtues and vices of this horse and that horse, pointed out the best and the worst of our remounts, stated what he thought of this man and the other, assured me Sergeant Wilson was the smartest

sergeant in the regiment, and while he narrated details of the misdemeanour for which Private Ward was now "doing seven days," on the sergeant-major even, himself, he ventured to express an opinion; so that when feed sounded, and the men "stood at their horses" in solemn silence, and with their feed-bags in their hands, while I had my own little private inspection, I found I had very little to learn from my sergeant-major of what had occurred to horse and man during my absence on leave. The free-and-easy meal of luncheon, which so surely follows stables, beginning at or any time after one o'clock, was always patronised at discretion. To-day Allan was specially advised to make a good square meal—"nothing like it to make you show up well in sword exercise and halloo pro-

perly to your imaginary troops;" for he was that afternoon to be "shown up" for dismissal from foot parades, sword exercise, etc.; and, as he buckled on his belts, preparatory to departure, he was severely heckled about having lost his temper in the school that morning, and having replied to the riding-master, which, his brother subs averred, would entail the most serious consequences—possibly arrest, stoppage of leave, and what not—besides the lasting enmity of the martinet, who wielded his long, embossed, and silver-mounted whip—fitting emblem of his office—within the closed doors and narrow walls of the riding-school, and the sight of which invariably made certain high-bred chargers wince, and break from trot to canter.

The good old chief seldom or ever came

into lunch, and if so, generally late—when he would withdraw his chin-strap, push his forage-cap on to the back of his head, eat a few mouthfuls of cold meat hurriedly, drink a glass or two of claret, and enquire all round into the projects of his officers, what was coming off next, and what was best to be done that afternoon. Colonel John Layton took a sincere interest in his officers personally—their occupations, their pastimes, and their prowess in this or that direction, as also the well-being of his men, which he sedulously looked after and catered for; often had they to thank him for extra comforts and arrangements tending to their benefit, in barracks, or camp, or flying column. He was not one of those who, as he left the orderly-room or stables at 1 P.M., put off the commanding officer

and its cares with his uniform, or merely meted out justice and the words of command with the regularity of clock-work.

John Layton was a man of commanding stature and fine proportions, of fair complexion, and light-grey eyes; so that, with his closely-cropped hair, short moustache, and clean-shaved cheeks, he never looked more than forty; and when I meet him in the "Rag" at this date, he hardly seems to have turned the half-century. An untiring sportsman and a keen shot, he had secured many good heads and fine skins in India before he left the Hussars, and came to the "Black Horse," wearing the medal for the Mutiny upon his breast. On the best of terms with his officers, he was not above saying to a couple of his subalterns, "Not going on leave?" perhaps for the Liverpool,

or Two Thousand, or some Hunt meeting in the county, which involved a two days' absence—"Well, no more am I." Then, turning to his adjutant, "There is nothing to do to-morrow or next day, is there, Mr Davidson?" (he always used the mister to him when speaking on matters connected with duty). "Well, I will tell you what—we'll all three run up to town, and you shall both dine with me at the 'Rag;' and I'll take a box for us at the theatre." This especially if he knew the officers in question were not overburdened with this world's goods. But it did occur sometimes that, returning by the midnight mail, after having held bad cards at the Arlington, and having been roused from fitful slumbers at 4 or 5 A.M., the field-day did not appear at all a success. Then the squad-

rons would be halted, and the officers' call sounded, and it would be intimated to them that the commands had been badly carried out, that the subalterns seemed to have forgotten their drill; and then, turning to the adjutant, he would say, "You, Mr Davidson, must have them in future; every one below the rank of captain on all parades." And, addressing the assembled body of officers, who stood with horses reined back in a semicircle round him, he would tell them that they were all riding carelessly, with the exception of certain field officers, and perhaps a senior captain, whom he would mention, and that there would be riding-school every day for all the officers, and no more leave till further orders. A few days after this, perhaps, the sun shone upon his honest countenance, the men trotted

past with precision; on their pivot-flank, swiftly and truly, the troops came round at a gallop, and while the sunlight glittered upon burnished bit and flashing sword and brazen helmet, the evolutions of troop and squadron and wing, as they parted and locked again, were performed in a way that brought a smile of pleasure into the face of the commanding officer, and resulted in the embargo on leave being removed, and the drills taking place in their usual rotation. With the exception of muster parade, the 31st was, nine times out of ten, an uneventful day in barracks; nor did this particular one distinguish itself in any way from many that went before or succeeded it. A soldier's life, in time of peace and in barracks, is not so full of change and excitement as is generally sup-

posed, varied as it is, perhaps more than in any other profession. Yet, to many of the less fortunate officers, there are periods during the leave season, when scattered days with maybe distant packs, short visits at country-houses (for few of them can be spared from the requisite duties), are the only variations from a round of "stables," "route marching," "outpost duty," and the inevitable boards upon damaged carbines, and "necessaries" made away with.

Sometimes, even in these duller quarters, there is little to mark the guest-night, barring the couple of black coats present and the strains of the band. So, when I bethought myself how I should put in the afternoon, I found I had the choice of a seat on the drag, or a ride with Teddy Burton across the Downs. I elected to do

neither, but to smoke a quiet cigar with the Colonel, and then, after an hour with my always present violin, meet the society captains and cornets at Mrs Bouverie's. There I found them, and I know not which—the aroma of souchong or the mutual incense of flattery which was ascending to the ceiling —was, if analysed, the strongest; and if the bevy of beauty round "the Squire" was the largest, I perceived my Cornet was evidently holding his own, and an adept at giving and taking the badinage of society. The captains, old soldiers, were less conspicuous, in bay windows or semi-detached alcoves, but none the less in danger, as they balanced their teacups, and reiterated the shibboleth they had tutored themselves in since the day when they too were Cornets.

CHAPTER IV.

"With burnished brand and musketoon,
So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon,
That lists the tuck of drum."

Towards the end of April we received our orders to proceed from Hilltown to Seaforde, in the south of England, a march of eight or nine days, and, I think, on the whole we were most of us glad of the change.

My troop and Burton's were to march with headquarters, so we would have the Colonel and Staff with us, and, a great element on the march, the Band. Altogether we would be about nine officers, including Fitzgerald, a nice young fellow, tall and very fair, with irregular features,

but all the same of a taking appearance, and his cheery laugh and pleasing smile did not belie his heart; he was one of Burton's subalterns, and quite after his own pattern, being always ready to take a part in everything that went on.

Not many days after the order came down, we were drawn up, at 7 A.M. on a fine May morning, ready for the start; the other wing had preceded us, and our remaining squadron started with us, but was to diverge a few miles out of the town, and take a different route during the whole of the march to Seaforde. The barrack-yard did not look like itself at all. Great cases of mess property, stable chests, packing cases, chairs and tables to be returned to the local upholsterer, were about in all directions, while matting, straw, and paper

defiled the heretofore well-kept gravel. Servants, dismounted men, women and children, artisans and the convalescent who were to proceed by train, stand about, along with civilians who have penetrated into the Square to see the final start. Alone of the officers, the Colonel had slept in barracks, and, as he swallows his tea and toast in the deserted ante-room, all are keen to be off. The appropriate air of the ruling comic song takes us into the town, whose streets, even at that early hour, are thronged to see the departure of the soldiers. The principal shops have not been opened yet, but that only affords an excuse for the good-looking shop-girls to show themselves on the foot-paths. Just passing the bridge at the bottom of the town, the regiment is halted for five minutes, that farewells may be taken

and given by the men to the sweethearts whom they will not see again, and to the wives whom they will. As we get a mile or two into the country, sometimes the little son of a house where we have visited is at the gate to call out to us, and sometimes too he is accompanied by his sister to speed us on our journey. The day is quite spring-like, and it is a treat to ride a fine, well-bitted charger with the troops "at tuck of drum," through the leafy lanes of England, past hall and farm and cottage, past the stately homes of her aristocracy, with their ancient oaks and beechen walks, and gardens trim with flowers, and their lily-skirted lakes. Yonder, through the net-work foliage of the linden trees, you see the red-brick manor-house of the time of the great Elizabeth, and at the back you

descry the square courtyard, with its bell and weathercock upon the roof where you know the stables are; you can see the red-brick walls that enclose the old-fashioned garden, you can see the little frog-inhabited green pond in the centre; and that post that stands near it is surely an antiquated sun-dial; that water in the corner too, must be an artificial tank for pike, or perch. You have begun to think about the south wall and its peaches, when the dip of your descent excludes it from your vision, and presently the iron gates of trellis-work give to you a full front view of the mansion. You have no need to speculate which is the dining and which is the drawing-room, for, on the left of the hall door (recollect it is not ten o'clock yet), you can see, not eighty yards off, into the breakfast-room; you can

make out the silver urn and the feminine dispenser of tea, and the bald-headed old gentleman at the other extremity of the table; you discover a boy and a couple of young ladies, as they turn their faces to the windows. But the trot is sounding now, and two miles of it is not enough for you. A "halt," and a sit-at-ease follow the trot, and you go round your horses and enquire after backs, and feet, and fetlock joints, and the members of your troop in general. You expect to arrive about twelve, and what with smoking, chatting, and two or three long trots more, you find it is after eleven, and that it is advisable to send Mat O'Halloran on ahead to order for man and beast. All are not to be at the same hotel, but it is arranged that all shall breakfast together, and a host of orders are promul-

gated. One wants a bath, another some gruel for his charger, who has been fretting, but Mat is equal to the occasion. To-day he is travelling on Fitzgerald's little Irish car, with a "trapper" of Burton's in it, and before he commences to forge ahead, he draws from his breast-coat a large leather pocket-book, black, with a golden horse upon the back of it, which he considers emblematic of the corps, and enters therein, with the stump of a pencil, the various orders given him. Without this pocket-book he never leaves home; it contains an entry of any bets he makes or has commissions to make, addresses of dealers, forage contractors, pigeon breeders, and dog fanciers, bills receipted and otherwise, and probably a threatening letter from a tradesman, and a dishonoured bill or cheque.

For larger transactions, he carries a little horn inkstand in one of his outside pockets, and the stump of a quill pen in his waistcoat one. We were to be billeted at Screwton that day, and not long after our arrival were seated, washed and refreshed, at the plenteous board of mine host of the "Black Bear." No one required very much pressing to begin, and of the four or five hot dishes of fish, flesh and fowl, two at least were tried by every one, and we felt we had merited our repast; and "Now, here," when we had all nearly done, exclaimed Teddy Burton, "I think it is just about time to throw in a couple of eggs on the top to lubricate the whole."

After this square meal, I visited the billets with MacDonagh, the "Pig and Whistle," the "Bald-Faced Stag," the

"Goat and Compasses," and other inns of ancient and curious signs. When properly performed, this duty is no sinecure, and takes a pretty long time.

Dinner on these occasions is unceremonious as regards dress; indeed, although the dog-cart may accompany the line, one carries little in it but a military change, clean linen, and toilet necessaries, and clothing, etc., for the horses.

The march the following day does not call for any special description, and on the third day we lay at Leytonstone. We may call it a London suburb, where we were also to put in Sunday. The billets were far apart, and took, as Fitzgerald termed it, a great deal of doing. Naturally he and Teddy Burton and Allan could not be so near the gay Metropolis without having a

look in, and there they spent the Sabbath day, dining at the house of some relative of Burton's, and arranging for the party, including a very pretty cousin of Burton's, to meet on London Bridge. Therefore, amidst the crowd and bustle, and the tramp of scarlet-clad warriors, two fair young faces looked up and smiled at three dragoons, who had barely room or time to halt, half turn, and condole with them on their early start, and to be told in return how magnificent they all looked, and how flattered they ought to be at their coming so far to meet them in such a horrid crowd. And so the gallant troopers went on through the business streets, now on asphalt, now on wood, now on greasy paving stones, slipping and recovering themselves, till the friendly macadam of the more suburban districts

gave surer footing. Kingston and Surbiton were that day's destination, and, after leaving London, the march was pleasant enough, and scarcely, indeed, were we out of the suburbs when, on Wandsworth Common, we discovered from afar the moving body of horsemen that was coming to meet us, Hussars, and who would take up the quarters we had left. They are at the "trot" when we descry them first. Through the dust we see the glint of scabbard and burnished bit, and hear the jingle and the tramp of a hundred horses, but as they come nearer, we catch the stentorian tones of their Chief, as he orders "the walk," and the horses toss the foam that flecks their lips, and, snorting, blow the dust from out their nostrils, and, as we meet, the Hussars pay us the compliment due to our seniority. But the two

Colonels are old cronies, and a mutual halt is agreed upon, while the officers mix with each other, and give such valuable information as they may, relative to their respective quarters, and when the regimental call of the "Black Horse" is sounded, and the Chief has thundered the command to "walk," "march," the band of the Hussars strikes up the air that the Dragoon Guards march past to, "Money Musk."

That evening MacDonagh was hospitably entreated, for I bethought me that near the little town where we lay that night, was the country residence of very great friends of mine, the Singletres, and at whose house in former years I had often been a welcome guest. To send a note by Mat O'Halloran on the little car was no trouble at all, and a request that, if at home, I might bring my

Cornet to dinner also, met with a pressing invitation for us both to come out at once. So, whenever we could get away, we started, and drove to Hazleton Heath, and were just in time to be regaled with tea in the summer-house, and the view of heath and heather hills and pine trees stretching in all directions, and seeming to make their presence felt in the aroma they disseminated.

It was a warm day for May, and tea and country cream were not to be despised after a course of hotel ditto, and a long tour of outlying stables; but the real charm to us lay in our hostess. About eight-and-twenty, she looked considerably younger, her head and face were small but beautifully shaped, every feature being perfectly and delicately carved, and "eyes, dark with the liquid tenderness

of night, flashed forth the radiant gladness of the light." Her complexion was of the pale olive that so often accompanies very dark brown hair, but it had the bloom and sheen of health upon it. I have not seen her for years, but in those days she did not torture her hair with tongs, and heap up her head with all sorts of puffs and frisettes, etc., etc., but wore it plainly parted down the middle, and brushed back. With all this she was very charming, gave herself no airs, nor did she ever pose as a "professional beauty." They were but a small party—herself, her husband, and a couple of visitors; but it was a most delightful change to be there, to see and talk to her again in her tastefully furnished rooms, with flowers and books and orna-

ments, after the cheerless contents of many hotels. It was late when we left, and we drove home by the light of star and moon, or should never have found our way. After two more marches, one of them in pouring rain, we arrived at Seaforde, and there we were left for about two years.

It would have been a pleasure to me to record many of the various events which occurred while we were quartered there, to have brought to the mind of those who have left, some of the country house parties, race meetings, or regimental balls, in which they were participators. But I am principally concerned in giving a general outline of Allan's career in the Black Horse, and of the events which later on led indirectly to its ter-

mination, and this the reader will be able to gather without my trenching upon our garrison life at Seaforde. I may say, however, that my loving friendship and strong attachment to Allan strengthened with time, and I believe that his feelings towards me did also, but Burton was his "fidus Achates" and it was oftener with Burton he made his expeditions far or near, but I was the recipient of their history as he smoked and chatted, and I listened and played the violin.

CHAPTER V.

"Better to hunt in fields for health unbought
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught."

ALLAN, having had no long leave the previous year (not that he was entitled to it), nevertheless, by special application and the good graces of the Colonel, was compensated by a grant of four months from the 1st November. My leave extended from the same date till the end of January, and what we did was this :—

We went down to Weedon with a combined stud, consisting of our second chargers, both of them very good hunters, five or six undeniable performers, and a screw obtained through the instrumentality of Mat O'Hal-

loran, not much to look at, just sound enough for hacking, and having an occasional day on. We had a very good time all round, and the campaign to be fully described would occupy a volume; to compress it into a page would spoil one of the happiest chapters of my life. My recollections there of sport and pastime, of good fellows met again, and pleasant acquaintances made, will not easily be effaced. Dance and dine out, of course, we had to do occasionally; Allan insisted on that, and I enjoyed his youthful enthusiasm somewhat sympathetically, albeit no ancient chaperon taking out a niece was ever keener to get her charge home in decent hours on the plea of bringing her fresh to the post the next, or rather, that morning.

But what I shall never forget were the

long, quiet evenings with Allan after dinner —for here I had my own way, and insisted upon our dining at a reasonable and early hour.

"You ought to come home hungry," I said, "and if you are, why spoil your dinner by a little interim meal of tea and poached eggs on toast to sustain you till the fashionable hour of eight o'clock, and be compelled to sit over the fire with the papers, smoking cigarettes, while your appetite has been partially appeased, and the pleasure of sitting down to dinner ravenous destroyed? My boy," said I, "when we hunt together, we shall dine at half-past six, unless otherwise specially arranged, and, if you are home early, let nothing but a cup of tea and a biscuit pass your lips. No, sir, the standing orders are early to bed and early to rise."

And I was a martinet in this respect. I quite came the commanding officer over him there. Early, therefore, as it would be called in these days, we did dine, and, after the things had been cleared away, I can see him sitting opposite me in our snug little sitting-room on the other side of the fire, with its old-fashioned, brass-mounted fire-place, and the shabby, low, and narrow mirror, which used to distort his good-looking face so of a morning, and make it a matter of difficulty for him to see whether he had folded his white hunting-scarf at the correct angle, or his chin was shaved sufficiently clean (this he need not have been alarmed about), as he emerged from the much darker bedroom, booted and breeched below, but clad in his smartly-trimmed, dark-brown smoking coat above. I can see him as he

sat in the horse-hair arm-chair, while, with one of his feet upon the fender, he smoked a cigarette, and chatted for a time over the events past and to come, the latest regimental news, our horses and domestic concerns, the last London gossip, etc. More often, after a "real good thing," when he got excited over the discussion, he would fling the cigarette aside, and, rapping loudly with his knuckles here and there, would emphasise some important incident, while, with animated gesture and hurried speech, he graphically told the fortunes of the chase, and "showed how fields were won."

About the middle of December, Teddy Burton joined us, with a couple of horses, just gave us a look in, as he expressed it, to see how we were getting on, and in what sort of form the Cornet was going with the

Pytchley. Dear old Teddy, always the best of company, and always ready to take the sunshine with the storm, the rough with the smooth, of soldiering. But he had not been with us many days when an invitation arrived from the Princess Charlotte's Own at Coventry for a dance, and a private note to Allan from Captain List, that if he chose to come he would mount him the following day, and that he was certain that Temple would mount old Merrilis, or any one we brought with us. And well they might, for in that year of grace the detachment at Coventry numbered nearly as many hunters as troopers, the seven or eight straight-going, hard-riding officers with it averaging from eight to a dozen quods a-piece, all told. Moreover, they shot in great form, and kept a French *chef*.

"Now, here," said Teddy (that was his infallible preface), "I am on, for one, for this entertainment, and you must let the Cornet go, Merrilis. I'll see that he does not fall in love, and goes to bed duly sober."

So they departed, and, while *en route*, Teddy Burton, who was at that moment short of horses, proposed that after Coventry they should run over to Monte Carlo, just spend Christmas week there, and return in time for the New Year. Nothing was easier, argued Teddy. "You take your ticket one morning by the express, and you lunch at the Golden Mountain the next afternoon." All you had to do was to put a pony in your pocket to last the week, and there you were.

To this the Cornet gave assent, and wrote me about his horses and clothes, and I re-

plied by wire, saying, "Leave refused," and wrote that I would meet him in a couple of days with the Warwickshire from Rugby, would send on his horse, and bring him another kit to the hotel there, where he could dress.

Thus ended that proposal; but Teddy himself was no longer keen about it, for he had met his fate at the Coventry ball. We shall see her again before this memoir ends; a sweet girl *débutante*, looking as if she were fresh from English country scenes, and recalling summer, and roses, and arbours honeysuckle twined, she looked so fresh, so fair, so dainty, with her pale oval face, her wistful blue eyes, with their golden lashes, her sweet and lovely mouth, and her wealth of golden hair, so *négligé*, and becomingly done up. I had a great descrip-

tion of her from Allan, and also of Teddy's courtship in the two days he had witnessed it. Teddy was overwhelming, almost overbearing, in his love-making. The approaches and the outer works leading to the citadel he was besieging were invariably carried at once by storm and assault; he had always been accustomed to victory, but possibly he never laid siege where his appearance in the field was looked upon with coldness or indifference.

The Cornet thought that he was really in love this time, and prophesied what an excellent husband, if it came off, he would make. But I had my doubts; I felt sure that, when his ardour had cooled down, and the glamour of his first impressions wore off, he would consider a general sort of affection and solicitude for her happiness

quite a sufficient provand for the little heart to feed on. Devoted, in the form of worship, or sympathetic with women, I knew he was not ; kindness he thought sufficient for them, and that if one of them was married to a good sort of fellow, her home, her occupations, and her outings were quite sufficient for her. His own particular sports, late hours, and dinings out, as well as short absences for shoots or race meetings, would, I was sure, be continued to the full. And I am afraid I was a true prophet.

Thus passed November and December. Allan had faithfully promised to go over and see the old man, as he called his father, and bring me with him, and I had assented thereto. We were each to take only a single horse with us, for an odd day with the harriers or County Down staghounds,

and look to friendly mounts, or hiring from Belfast, for the rest. Allan guaranteed my being asked to one or two other houses by his special friends, when they knew I was tacked on to him. The combined stud therefore was broken up; two or three went up to Tattersall's with unblemished reputations, two over to Ireland with Allan's batman, and the rest of them back to Aldershot.

In the good old soldiering days I used to visit in country-houses, though I think that in my heart of hearts I was always more of the solitary than gregarious type; I never do now; they still ask me, some of them. If there is a very large party, the meals appear to be more numerous, and certainly last a good deal longer; the hours to me are intolerably late, and I am tempted into

eating, drinking, and smoking more than I desire, or deserve, from the cup of tea when called in the morning, which is necessary to pull one together, to the last cigar and whisky and soda at 2 A.M. There are compensations, however; between times you are more your own master, punctuality —except for dinner—is not so specially exacted, and I get more surreptitious hours with my beloved instrument. If, however, there is a small party, though the hours are earlier, and there is little or no bear fighting, I am almost expected to be down for prayers before breakfast; my health (always delicate) is inquired after daily, the hours I slept recorded and annotated, and my general happiness catered after in a way that is positively irksome. I feel, as I enter the breakfast-room, that I come under what

I call the "tyranny of the teapot." I must admit that I like the autocracy of the Club coffee-room the best. Another drawback there is, too, I feel a positive criminal if I withdraw at abnormal hours into the smoking-room, carrying with me the one and only *Times*. More difficult, too, is it under these circumstances, to shirk one's liquor after dinner (has it come to this?) when your host produces the particular Lafite, or the curious old port he recollects you used to lap up, in the days when Morrison stroked the Oxford eight, or Scarlett held command at Aldershot. Furthermore, though some of my best and truest friends are women, as for flirting and dancing nowadays, I am a Gallio, and care for none of these things.

CHAPTER VI.

"It was an ancient, venerable hall."

So we arrived at Allan MacDonagh's home on New Year's morning, *i.e.*, the ruins of Radcliffe Castle, and the Pinnace, as it was called, wherein the family always resided. The MacDonaghs were of ancient and honourable descent, coming over at the time of the Ulster Plantation, they had, in common with those mighty founders of prosperity and civilisation, and upholders of liberty, both civil and religious, given many soldiers and sailors to Great Britain, whose distinguished services had added lustre to the fame of the United Kingdom, and contributed at home

and abroad to build up the Empire of which we are most of us so justly proud.

Allan's grandfather had been a Peninsula and a Waterloo man, but he died leaving behind him only two sons, the elder a very distinguished naval officer, and Roderick MacDonagh, the present proprietor, and who had succeeded his brother Archibald a year or two before his sons joined the army—Allan, as we know, the Black Horse, and Archie the Highlanders. For three generations the MacDonaghs had been spending money freely, perhaps contaminated by the Irish air, or the magnetism of the old Celts, which lingered about the walls and flooring of the castle from which they had been driven, and which remained as a curse to the more modern possessors, drying up the spirit of prudence with which their race is

so pre-eminently endowed. This theory was propounded to me by a modern spiritualist; more likely it was an overstrain of generosity, or a predominating love of ostentation, that had gone to very nigh beggaring them. There was nothing they had not done in the way of lavish expenditure, from horses and hounds to an odd contested election, from a permanent house in Dublin to an occasional one in London, and this, too, with a splendid indifference to a decreasing income. Therefore, when Archibald MacDonagh, or the "Admiral," came in, the vast estates had been already curtailed, and what were left were greatly crippled, and mortgaged up to the door step, and Radcliffe Castle, upon which little or nothing had been spent, was fast showing signs of impending ruin.

The "Admiral"—by the way, he was never a pucka Admiral—who, throughout his naval career had been spending his money, or rather the family money, like a man, on his retirement at forty-three as a post-captain, pulled himself together and faced the inevitable. More estates were sold and mortgages paid off, and with a reduced establishment he commenced retrenchment on a scale as magnificent as the former extravagance. But after a year of farming, and such compensation as the society of the County Antrim could give him in lieu of the life of change and adventure he had been leading, he felt driven back again to London, and a room at Long's Hotel; for he, like Allan, was possessed of that same spirit of restlessness and love of excitement. What might have supervened it was easy to

prophecy, but shortly after his arrival he fell in love with and married a lady of large fortune, the whole of which was settled on the pair. With her and their only son they settled down at Radcliffe and lived a tranquil and happy life, varied by occasional runs to London or the Continent.

But one sorrow they did have—they lost their boy. He had inherited his mother's delicacy, and, caught out at sea in the winter by adverse winds, returned, after many hours of wet and cold, late at night from a distant headland, only to succumb after a few days of illness to inflammation of the lungs. And so Allan became a second son to them, and their love was transferred to him as their adopted son and heir.

It had long been the cherished scheme, and a plan discussed with the intensest in-

terest and prophetic pleasure by the owners, to pull down and rebuild the ancestral pile, "The Ruins," as he always called them, upon a smaller scale, and in this he was ably seconded by his wife, who took as much pride as he did in his Irish family and its fallen fortunes of estate. Already had "The Ruins" been unroofed, the lead and timber, the oak staircases and panelled walls torn down and sold for a song. But here and there low standing walls of extraordinary thickness had been left to mark the dimensions of, and to be built into the walls of, certain rooms, for the general contour of the building was to be preserved, and by special provision the fireplace of the great reception hall, with its marble fittings, its niches and emblazoned tiles, and the great block above the chimney piece on which was carved the

defiant arms of the house, was left entire. Already the neat little cottage house which stood hard by had been built, and dwelt in, when death stayed the hands of one of them. Mrs MacDonagh had never been strong, and a bad fall from a horse with the harriers hastened her end. After this the Admiral began to grow whiter and to break in health. He had "lived" in his younger days, and trying climates had undermined a naturally strong constitution; now he considered there was nothing much left to live for. The rebuilding was countermanded, and Archibald MacDonagh made his will. The scheme had not been wholly abandoned, but delayed. His brother who would succeed him was an old man too, and not calculated to deal in matters requiring energy or address. Allan, though a dear, good fellow, must commence

his career, and could not be entrusted with the restoration, at the early age at which he would probably come into possession. He left, therefore, after many and further dispositions, thirty thousand in the hands of trustees, netted and tied up with every provision invented by the law, for Allan MacDonagh, and after him for his brother Archie, when each or either of them was thirty years of age, to restore and rebuild the ruins of Radcliffe Castle. As we mentioned at the commencement of the chapter, Roderick MacDonagh succeeded his brother shortly before the period which this memoir embraces.

CHAPTER VII.

"This giant form like ruined tower,
Huge boned and tall and grim and gaunt."

WHILE the scheme for rebuilding the ruins was fructifying in the minds of the Admiral and his wife, they had built themselves about a quarter of a mile to the front of, and equally near the sea-coast, on towering cliffs, a neat slated two-storied house, capable, as they thought, with attics to just contain themselves, and perhaps a guest during the year or two that they were exiled from the Ruins; but they had hardly been resident in it for six months ere the desire of having from time to time two or three of their friends,

or his wife's relatives to stay, resulted in its enlargement after a unique fashion.

The general aspect of the Pinnace, as the Admiral called it, and its surroundings were as follows:—After leaving the high road, for a mile you traversed an avenue that wound through small plantations, and over an undulating tract of downs bordered more frequently by clumps of laurels or rhododendrons as it approached the confines of the Northern Sea. There, throned above the waters on the tall white cliffs, the Castle of Radcliffe had defied the storm, and there the more modest Pinnace took the eastern sun, or was swept over by the wintry blast. Here and there, as you were marching on higher ground, you caught a glimpse of the far off blue, as it stretched itself away in the distance, and

upon the horizon, mingled with the borders of the cold grey sky, you felt the presence of the ocean, and its wild salt breezes fanned, while they cooled your cheek; or advancing more nearly to the dwelling of the MacDonaghs, you heard the clash and seething of the waters, as they broke and squandered on the projecting headlands.

The Pinnace had been built and added to for comfort only. You entered by the yellow oak hall door into a diminutive hall, and the staircase faced you. The ground floor had originally consisted of but four rooms, on the right a sitting-room, on the left a parlour; while at the back of the sitting-room was the pantry, and on the other side the kitchen, where, by means of a sliding panel betwixt it and the parlour, the modest dinner could

be more hotly and quickly served, or an addition called for, and it was through this aperture that the praise and blame of the Admiral were freely dispensed in commanding tones, and couched in strong and nautical language. The kitchen and pantry storeroom looked upon a semi-circular yard, the base of which was the width of the house, and in this were several one-storied buildings, so to speak under one roof, and comprising larder, boot-room, wood-house, and other domestic offices on a small scale. The improvements were as follow:—

At each side of the house, and upon the same frontage, there were two long, low-roofed wings erected, consisting each originally of but one long room, with two square windows to the front, whilst

east and west, as the Pinnace stood, each of them boasted another window under the gables at the end of the house. The parlour gave into the western wing which Randolph on his accession had had subdivided by a partition into two very fair-sized rooms, and of them, the inner one was called the dining-room, and the further one, with its fine west view, his own particular bedroom. And here, by opening a door in the back wall, service could be obtained, or messages called out to the denizens of the kitchen or little back-yard. Such expressions as "Henry, the master's shouting for his boots, or his shaving water," or, "Kitty, the master's for the stirabout in his own room the morn," were often heard about 8 A.M., summer or winter.

On the other hand, the little sitting-room on the right, now used as library or writing-room, or, more often still, as the sitting-room *par excellence* in winter, gave into a long, low drawing-room—disproportionate, perhaps, to the other rooms of the house as it stood, but which, with extreme good taste, the Admiral's wife had so broken up with screens and easy-chairs, and here and there a hanging curtain or a low book-shelf, deftly placed, which formed a new recess, that you lost the sense of everything but luxury and comfort as you drew towards the fire of turf and peat, which flickered and blazed, so that the brazen fittings glowed and reflected the firelight. It had been decided that the window at the extremity of this room, looking east, should be a bay one, and here, upon a fine summer

morning, while you sat upon one of the soft-cushioned seats, specially adapted for the windows and the view, you could watch, as you lifted your eyes from the book you were reading, the divine expanses of the ever-changing sea.

Never the same, to-day it is dark and stormy; through the grey banks of cloud the sun shines fitfully; far out, the sea is wild and turbulent, and the great billows of the North Atlantic seethe and plunge in struggling masses; but yonder the great waves rise as though in serried ranks, they toss the sea-smoke from their haughty crests, and, advancing to the battle, as some mighty host advances, they break with thunder on the opposing coast. Great sheets of foamy spray are driven upward as they clash against the cliffs; the wild

winds catch hold of it, bear it aloft, scatter it over the Downs, and slap it against the windows of the Pinnace. Nothing but its height above the seething billows seems to save it from the drenching storm.

To-morrow the air is balmy, and the sun shines warmly down. You lie between the Pinnace and the cliff, upon short brown grass, and, leaning on your elbow, watch the gentle swell which is scarcely broken by the ripple on its surface. Far off, you recognise the dim grey outline of the coast of Scotland, while in the nearer distance the white sails of the fishing-boats contrast with the slumbering blue of the deep below them. Nearer inland, as it approaches from your left, you hear, or fancy that you hear, the throbbing engines of the Derry steamer, as it travels southward—leaving a faint black

track across the sky, while, once and again, the far-off booming of "Macallister's gun" strikes faintly on your ear.

Randolph MacDonagh, or the "meenister," as he was always called, for, indeed, he had been in the Church in his youth, was in his way a remarkable man, not from anything he had achieved, or from any mental powers, which as yet lay dormant in the cavities of his brain; far from it, it was from his personal traits of character; it was from the honest simplicity of his nature, such that, while thinking no wrong himself, he thought no wrong of others; it was from his childlike belief in the greatness of the family of the MacDonaghs that he was remarkable. Let us interview him, firstly, in the morning as he dresses. He has scraped the lather from the near sides

of his cheeks with a middling razor; the upper lip demands more accuracy; but the stiff beard and strongly indented furrows of the chin are not cleared without a running accompaniment of loud or smothered condemnation on the razors, or the beard, or Henry and his misdoings—his name usually figured in the catalogue somehow. Fairly scraped, we observe him "supping his porridge," while he paces the little dining-room to and fro with measured tread. His figure is tall and gaunt, and though something stooped, he towers pre-eminent above his fellow-men. The locks that cover his head are sparse and scanty now, but the large and bushy eyebrows are black, the eyes are large, and clear, and hazel, the features massive, and two deep lines that enclose the mouth run into ridges as they

approach the bones of his well-formed nose; the short and grizzled whiskers meet beneath his chin, and are lost behind his black satin stock (this observable only as he throws up his head). Daily he clothes himself in a tall, white-collared linen shirt, reaching to his knees, and which is not usually laid aside again till the moment for shaving at eight A.M. has arrived again. The black satin stock he always wears at home and abroad; his double-breasted black frock-coat is buttoned up, and the skirts are rather short, and look the more so from his tremendous stature; his trousers are of dark brown tweed, while his worsted socks are knitted at home, and his half-laced shoes are of Ballymena manufacture. Out of doors he wore a tall black hat, generally shabby, and of a certain old-fashioned make,

and without any curious curves or style. It was also mostly covered with a black crape band. After breakfast, he would propose to you, if you were his guest, a visit to the home farm, some three miles off, and embracing a walk over downs and heather-clad hills. He could walk great distances at his slow and measured pace, and, seeing the tall, gaunt figure a quarter of a mile off, coming up your avenue, with his long hazel staff, such as mendicants affect, his stooping gait, and the small white dog which invariably accompanied him, you would prepare yourself to resist the bearer of a begging-letter; arrived, you felt yourself in the presence of a born aristocrat.

Failing your company, he would visit the farm alone, or a neighbouring tenant, or, with an unadmitted pleasure, attend on foot

a distant funeral—not that he was not a kindly and warm-hearted man—but he liked the walk! He was pleased with the company of friends he met, the solemn discourses of the "meenister" he appreciated, and he enjoyed the "tumbler or two" of punch which warmed him for his long tramp home. Indeed, I was told that, after a cattle show dinner, or dining with the resident magistrate at Ballycastle, he could carry home nine or ten tumblers without their "showing," more than by a slight swaying of his gait.

But let us imagine he has returned from the farm with you about one o'clock, and has regaled you with cold corned beef and a glass of "Bushmills," or bread and honey—he never took lunch himself—then would he propose a walk to the "ruins." What pride he had was family pride, and if it

was a sin, we may forgive it to his simple character, which it rather ennobled. It was with veneration he entered the precincts of the "ruins;" you almost fancied he would "uncover" as he crossed over the solitary step which marked where once the grand hall-door had stood. He would expatiate for hours on the greatness of the "ruins" and its possessors; he would tell you the name of every former room, and, pointing out where they stood, the chief events connected with them; here, on the top of that staircase, had been his father's study; to that window frame, the lower part of which you still saw standing, belonged the state bedroom, unoccupied since the death of his father, who went off in the delirium of typhus fever, and cursing "Bony"; over there was the young ladies' drawing-room;

and here, where you stood, was the great banqueting-hall; it was here the dinner was given to his brother "the Admiral," and a sword presented to him when he returned a captain from Navarino. Each room, each crevice had its special history; reminiscence suggested reminiscence; it was well you opined the family pictures kept company with the family archives in the Ballymena bank, though the position of the splendid gallery that ran the whole length of the house had been pointed out to you. Scarcely a week passed but, for some valid reason, "the meenister" paid a visit to the "ruins," to see if the great chimney-piece had withstood the last storm, if the cattle had broke into the place, or if the ivy should be further encouraged or torn down.

In the evening, after an early dinner, he

would sit and spell over the London and country papers just arrived, or play back-gammon with you till the nine o'clock tea came in, but had you been favoured with continual luck, or if the post had been fraught with annoyance, there would be some muttering and objurgations, you saw how he longed to kick over the little table, and it mostly ended by his leaving the room with a bang to have a "free swear." Sometimes after tea he visited the "old parlour," as it was now called, and, sitting down with a solitary candle and his old walnut-wood and brass-mounted desk, conned over the medals he was collecting, and of which he had a goodly store. Some, indeed, had belonged to members of the family, and others brother collectors had forwarded him. Writing and reading in connection with these was his only literary taste.

CHAPTER VIII.

"He doth excel
In honour, courtesy, and all the parts
Court can call hers, or man could call his arts."

A WEEK comprised the time we spent at MacDonagh's home. I perceived that the old man regarded his son with affectionate pride as the MacDonagh of the future, while the affection Allan bore towards him was somewhat tempered by the awe with which he had inspired him in childhood, and the recollection of the terrific outbursts of passion which had attended the delinquencies of his schoolboy days, and the balancing of his college accounts. Our life there was uneventful. Arriving on the Monday morn-

ing, we managed to put in a couple of days of fair sport with the county pack of harriers, and two days we obtained a mixed bag of pheasants, cock, and rabbits in the clumps and spinnies that skirted the avenue, and upon the home farm. Sometimes in the evening one of us essayed a game of back-gammon with the old man, but with a yellow-back novel, tobacco, and an hour's communing with the violin, I asked for nothing further in the way of recreation.

Most mornings, also, ulster clad, we hurried with old MacDonagh to his Spartan bath before breakfast time. It appears he had found a sort of inlocked creek or haven, safe from the outward gust of waters, but which the great billows, hurling themselves over the barrier of rock that protected its entrance, used daily to fill and refill at a

varying depth with their fresh salt waters, until at high tide they overflowed again. Thither, no matter what the weather, either before or after the matutinal shave we wot of, old MacDonagh, arrayed in a long, sea-admiral's cloak, used to pick his way by a tortuous path, and down the broad and hand-railed steps he had constructed in the rock; and here, after casting off the ulster and pyjamas, the short, sharp plunge into the briny was worth a dozen pick-me-ups, and at least a bottle of orange bitters.

But we had both been bidden to the mansion of a county magnate, and Allan informed me it was not an invitation to be thrown away, and so we started for a drive of sixteen miles to Ballyvaston. King Frost had been inaugurating his sway for the last two days, our car horse was

"roughed," and occasional showers of powdery snow, driven by the north wind, had sparsely covered the iron roads. We were more intent on keeping warm, and our briar-roots alight, than doing over much talking, and the conversation chiefly referred to the names and circumstances connected with the places through which we passed. In course of time, varied by an occasional stamping walk up one of the numerous hills we had to pass over, we arrived at the massive lodge gates, that foretold the end of our journey.

"Don't flatter yourself that you are arrived," said Allan; "you are only within measureable distance of 'Home Rule.'"

The avenue is at least three Irish miles in length; they have very nearly stuck up that fact upon the gates, so many guests have

insisted on getting down here for a short, brisk walk before reaching the house, and found out too late the journey they have let themselves in for, and to a *contretemps* of this sort, which occurred to an elderly Cabinet Minister, Stevenson always attributes the failure of the negotiations he was carrying on, on his part, regarding an Irish Land Bill the Minister thought of introducing.

Darkness was now rapidly falling over copse and hedgerow, spinney and plantation, which bordered the drive, and we wrapped ourselves closer in our own ulsters and our own meditations, undistracted save by the crowing of the pheasant cocks, and the scuttling across the avenue of a rabbit or a witch-like hare we had disturbed, while, as we approached the inland lake, the crowing

of the wild fowl going to roost, or the slow and solemn rising of a crane as his wings loomed large and grey in the growing shadows of descending night, alone diverted our reveries. Not sorry were we, indeed, to find ourselves in the large and well-lighted hall at last, and to be met by our cheery host, who, advancing with his genial smile, that spoke the kindly feelings of his heart, shook Allan by both hands, ejaculating,—

"How good of you, my dear boy, to come on such a day," and, turning to me as he shook hands, "So very glad to make your acquaintance, Merrilis; I feel sure I met your father at Cowes, and, you know, my mother was a Dorsetshire woman, and that must be quite a bond between us, as I hear you come from there. But you must both have some tea at once. Come along

with me; we shall find it in the gallery to-day," and he led the way up a passage staircase and along a corridor lined with mementos of the chase, and decked with bow and spear, or curious Indian pipe, or bit of armour, or antique sword, for he had travelled much in many lands. Here, as you passed beneath the skylight, on either side were water-colours of some of the places he had visited, and portrayed with no mean ability by himself. These, too, were interspersed with photographic views of scenes in which he had been an actor, while, above the curtained door that led you into the gallery, you looked up at the tattered colours of the 33d Light Dragoons, of which his uncle had been the colonel. The gallery, long and wide, was carpeted and furnished as a sitting room, and on the walls hung

many ancestral forms by mighty masters. Partially shut off by a tall and stately screen, we were hardly *en evidence* until we had turned its corner, when our host, Mr Stevenson, or, to give him his full designation, George York Haverford Stevenson, at once presented me, saying, as he beamed affectionately upon his wife,—

"I've brought you in Allan MacDonagh and his friend Captain Merrilis, and we all want some tea."

The wish was graciously seconded by our hostess, and soon we were chatting in unaffected ease over the best of Darjeeling tea, for, as to this comestible only was our host a gourmet. Tea over, Mr Stevenson excused himself on the plea of work, saying,—

"Here, when I come over for a holiday,

I seem to be harder worked than in London, at my chambers, or 'the house.' There I am never allowed to bring back a brief to study, or the minutes of a committee meeting to look over," and he suggested to Allan that he should take me into the library, where there was also a fire, and let me pick a book, or look over a volume of caricatures, and so we parted company till dinner time.

Mrs Stevenson personally I dare not venture to write about, or describe the charm with which she united the triple qualities of wife, mother of happy children,—who, at certain hours, were always about her,—and our hostess dispensing social blessings. Suffice it to say that she displayed within her own lines and in her own province an amount of tact and ability equal to that of

her husband, then one of the most rising men of the day. He had been through the curriculum of Eton and Oxford, and, after a year or two of perpetual travel, had settled down to exhaustive work at the bar and in the "house," at both of which he had already made a name. About the average height, in appearance he was strongly intellectual, and the short, "judicial" whisker he wore left to view the perfect carving of his clear-shaved lip and chin. Four neighbours came to dinner, and our host, with well-brushed hair, and in the collarless, white cambric stock since affected by some of the young bloods in their hunting kit, looked considerably smartened and cheerful, having now thrown off himself the cares of state and estate. Dinner at a small round table, not over, but tastefully decorated, was

well and quickly served; or was it that the subjects so *naïvely* and skilfully touched upon by our host made the hour that is sometimes wearisome seem to fly? Mrs Stevenson was not so voluble, but great in opposition, or contravening a statement with argument. There, we never sat long, and, after coffee, adjourned to the room yclept "saloon" which adjoined the dining-room, and here our host, with touching apologies, begged to be allowed to look over and discuss with his neighbour-man the making of some new road, a plan of which lay on the little table beside his own arm-chair, and on which four silver candlesticks were burning, while Mrs Stevenson and I were entreated to draw forth sweet music from piano and violin. A couple of rubbers of "drawing-room whist," interrupted nevertheless by tea, and an occa-

sional anecdote that must be repeated to the adjoining quartette followed, and, when Allan and I, having "whiskyed and sodaed" the neighbour-man, and discussed with him the feasability of skating on the morrow, adjourned to the little smoking-room, I said to myself,—

"The Island of Circe is not in it with this place."

At Ballyvaston, breakfast was always early, partly that some of the children might be present with them, and partly that the Stevensons might get through their business in good time. Up to this Allan and I had been there *en famille*. In a few days, however, there was to be a dance and a two days' shoot, and in the meantime we were free to exercise our wicked wills in certain covers

only, and over certain drives; a permission we availed ourselves of in a sort of happy-go-lucky way, more for the sake of a walk with the dogs and a solitary beater than for the sport afforded. The fascinations also of "curling" distracted us, for now the ice bore well, and we were both improving rapidly under the tuition of the valet, Mr Frederick Nowell, a first-rate hand at all games requiring skill, and this pastime occupied the most of our mornings.

Returning, perhaps, half-an-hour before the luncheon gong sounded, you would sometimes meet Mr Stevenson hurrying out from his study to the wooden tennis court he had erected, after a long morning spent in answering his letters, doing a little bit of "chamber practice," or

making a very good copy of a Greuze; and as he ran the fingers of his right hand through his hair, you would observe the traces of thought upon his brow and in his eyes; but he would give you a cheery challenge, and suggest that you should play him in preference to the marker, pulling out at the same time a handful of india-rubber balls from the pocket of his blue Norfolk jacket, and handing them over to you as your share, together with one of the bats he carried under his left arm. Of course you were both of you late for luncheon, but what odds, there was plenty of roast turkey undevoured, though the five or six children had helped to make a considerable hole in the provisions; so, while your hostess lingered and proposed the "plan

of campaign" for the afternoon, you did justice to the joint, and fortified yourself against the rigours of the climate by a glass of Gordon's brown sherry. It was generally voted that both amusements should be given a chance, and first that we should all have some skating with the children, and that afterwards we should be allowed to "curl" till darkness set in. Once or twice, too, people came to luncheon for the skating, which was lasting an unusually long time for Ireland, and once a larger party came for a regular picnic on the ice.

CHAPTER IX.

"For revels, dances, masks, and merry hours,
Forerun fair love, strewing his way with flowers."

And thus, and thus, eight days had passed, and with the ninth arrived the gunners and the people for the ball. I admit I was selfishly sorry; I felt our coterie would be broken up, and that, if in sight, I would probably not be within hearing, of our charming host and hostess. I was sorry, too, on Allan's account. I felt that the broad and wise view Mr Stevenson took of men and things, and the common-sense with which he endorsed it, could not but have a good influence upon him, although it should bear no fruit at the time. I felt that I had not done my duty by the boy.

"A self-imposed one," perhaps you will answer, in the tones of Cain when he exclaimed, "Am I my brother's keeper?" And I realised that, alongside the wish to be of benefit to him and his career, I had no noble example of unswerving fidelity to duty to set before him.

A dinner-party took place that evening, and we sat down, eight-and-twenty, to a banquet at which, I am thankful to say, there was, in colloquial phraseology, a profusion of lights, for I shared with Mr Stevenson the idea that it is difficult to have too much soft light shed upon white damask, exotic flowers, gleaming silver, and the faces of beautiful women.

The house party had been added to by a contingent of half-a-dozen, who came over in the family omnibus from a neighbouring

country-house, and we were thirteen or fourteen ourselves, including a couple of officers from the garrison at Belfast. Having given him a hint beforehand, for I wanted much to know who everybody was, I was not surprised to find Allan at my right hand when we sat down, or at the excuses he offered about the preponderating number of men when detected, and when the unfolding of napkins, laying down of fans and gloves, and breaking of bread, had made a rearrangement of places vexatious.

Then, amidst the flow of conversation that rose and fell and fluctuated about our end of the table, as our host was listening to, answering the other talkers, or himself narrating some experience, to which those within hearing were straining their attention, we questioned and answered each other

as to the company present, and had pretty well catalogued them all, when there were yet remaining two young ladies undiscussed, and of the pair I could give him some account of one.

"Don't stare," I said (for she was sitting opposite), "or she will notice us, and you are *épris* there, I think?"

"Not there, not there," he interposed; "but go on, quick!"

"Well, is she not simply perfect? What brilliant colouring! What soft brown eyes, that look as if they longed to love, and were asking you to be the lover! What red, ripe lips, and perfect mouth and teeth! And with what a becoming grace she has lifted her wavy dark-brown hair from off her face, in a loose and *négligé* coiffure! But listen, Cornet, and beware! Those dark-brown

eyes have never melted with a tenderness she felt for the loved one, no happy lover has ever kissed the first bloom from off those cherry lips—" Here Allan was recalled to duty by a question from the lady he had taken down, and I pursued my reverie somewhat thus,—" Surely," I imagined, " surely there must somewhere sleep within that palpitating breast, and beneath the sheeny folds of that brocade, that undulates so harmoniously to her heart's beat, not the dead ashes that line the crater, but the fires of love which will one day burst and startle her with their vehemence in a storm of passion and tears, at the magic touch of the fairy prince whose voice shall wake her from her statuesque repose, and make her thrill and quiver with the electric forces of a newer life—" and here I felt a

kick from Allan, as he whispered, "Wake up, old man; what have you been dreaming about? Go on, and tell me about the young lady opposite."

"Well," I resumed, "she will expect you to fall down and worship her—at a respectful distance, however; but don't presume upon her condescension too much. Here you are an *enfant gâté*, rather good-looking—I don't want to flatter you—made much of by the county, have something at your back. Here she may give you a dance, or even two; but do not look for them in Grosvenor Square; most likely she will hardly know you there—there are lots of them like that, men and women too. Is it selfishness or bad breeding?"

"Oh no, lots of the well-born and well-bred (?) ones do it too. Stevenson defines

it as 'indifference to the feelings of others,' and calls it 'want of nobility of character,'" answered the Cornet.

"Oh, yes, and besides that, she has never been through the purifying fires, has she, Allan? That makes them kinder and more sympathetic all round, but somehow she does not look to me really happy. To begin with, she is nearly thirty; in the races for a coronet or a millionaire, she has always 'missed stays,' and been obliged to go upon a new tack; she may have been courted, and admired, but, as you see, she has never pulled off the prize she has sailed for; the crafts of inferior calibre have crowded on more sail, and passed her ere the post was reached. No girl can enjoy that; it rankles, and, glorious creature as she is, the young ones, if they are really good looking, despite

her experience, have the freshness and attractiveness of youth, which puts them on even terms with her. No doubt she has other trials too that we frock-coated beings cannot understand."

"She must find it difficult to live up to her beauty," put in Allan; "but name, weight, and age?'

"Oh, Barbara Hetherington, aged thirty; met her at Canterbury years ago, and my cousins are intimate with her, and 'weight,' still a lovely figure, to speak by the card; but I opine that that is also a subject of anxiety. She is pecking at dry toast and has refused potatoes with her venison; she does not move, however, with the stately grace of the *débutante* over there, sitting next but one to the hostess, does she, Cornet? I watched her coming down to

dinner, the girl with the Irish grey inquiring eyes, that look so earnest beneath their darker lashes, and slightly arched eyebrows."

"And how pure and fresh the white camelia looks in her dark brown hair," responded the Cornet. "Do you know her, Merrilis?"

"Not I." But something struck me in his manner, and the eager questioning tone of his voice as he turned and said,—"Do you know her?" and the way in which he deprecated all further discussion by suggesting that, as we had neglected our duties right and left, and himself his dinner shamefully, we should now devote ourselves to them and the excellent pheasant and champagne that were going the rounds. It had not escaped me that his eyes had been travelling to the north-west corner of the

table all dinner time, and that there lay the magnet of his attraction. So, as Allan would not, let me complete the picture reverently, as in this instance he would have done himself.

Miss Maitland's face—for that I afterwards ascertained was her name—was of the oval type, complexion clear and delicate, with nose *retroussé*, and a mouth that was sweet but firm, and the lips of which were mostly parted, contrasting strongly with pearly teeth; altogether an earnest face, yet not devoid of quiet humour. So, during the sweets and dessert, we did our manners beautifully as required, and made up the "lee way" in our little nothings of conversation; but as soon as the ladies had left the room, and we sat down, Allan expressed the hope that he should soon

be able to join them in the "saloon" and commence the dancing. My aspirations did not point that way, and I informed him I hoped at least to have two more glasses of that La Rose first, and that then I had arranged with the neighbour-man we have come across before, to sneak off into the smoking-room, whither I had already despatched my smoking coat, and have a good cigar apiece, and that then we would walk in with "the crowd" after the dancing had commenced; a programme I religiously carried out, both as regards the La Rose and the smoking-room. Thence returning, I came across Allan. I knew by the toss of his head, and his quick, impetuous walk, kicking the stones, as Mat O'Halloran would have said, that something had gone wrong.

Catching me quickly by the arm, he said,

"Look here, old chap, I can't bear appearing to play the spy, but do come along with me. She's sitting in the library, and I know it's my dance."

"What, thrown over already by the brilliant beauty?" I answered.

"Oh, no, not that one; you know, well, her name is Miss Maitland—I've found out that much; she is the daughter of the new parson at Ballycastle, only five miles off us, and she knows the old man, and has even had tea at the 'ruins.'"

"Quite consecrated them," I put in, and then, "are you quite sure this was your dance? You know this one is a square, and she is probably 'sitting it out' with some old friend" (for which purpose the aforesaid library, running at right angles to the gallery, and of similar proportions, was

admirably adapted; here alone were the lights subdued, here also sofas and easy-chairs convenient).

"No, take my advice; I'll keep you in countenance here till the diva appears, and then you can slope up in an indifferent sort of way, and carry her off by force or fraud, while I am off to fight for my own hand." Nor had we long to wait, before, with mutual explanations, the Cornet was enabled to do so. His embarrassed manner, so different from his usual quasi-patronising and self-confident one, would have betrayed him to me, had I not already been somewhat in the secret.

That he managed to secure several more dances, and to cloak her as she departed, goes without saying. Given, of course, a medley of partners, the elements of a ball

are ever the same; the music, the lights, the supper, and the flowers differing but little in kind; but oh! what a difference it makes if "the only one is there," or even your queen of beauty for the nonce, to whom you are vowing ephemeral homage, and a mutual make-belief allegiance. To old Major Burrows the perfection of the other accessories are of little consequence, if the cutlets and game pie are perfect, the champagne properly iced, and dry. Captain Spencer requires whist-tables, and an oyster buffet to boot. While I, years of experience and balls in all quarters of the globe have made me very exigeant; but here a sybarite would have had nothing to complain of. I confess, with shame, I selected a non-dancing chaperon, and took her into supper, so as not to be disturbed by the

disappointed looks or gloomy innuendoes of a would-be partner.

So the ball went on till wax candles commenced to swirl and bend, chaperons to be anxious about the hour, the squires to grumble about the horses, and the partners to dance with ever renewed vigour, as they kept lassitude at bay with strong *consomme*, or chicken and champagne. And Miss Hetherington, how fared she? Oh, as she always did; got about the best of everything and everybody, waltzed twice with the host, had half a garrison intriguing for dances, went into supper with the General, and was the acknowledged queen of beauty. Could she ask for anything more? Sybarite again, I shirked that last delight, the final galop for the house party only, and after my "little queen's" was smoked, met the

roysterers entering, as I left the billiard-room.

There fell a still small rain that night, and the wind blew soft and warm from the south and west; one could even dress in the morning with the window opened, and watch the big black birds underneath the holly and laurel clumps as they preened themselves, and scraped and pecked in anticipation of the "square meal" so long denied them, and flew from plantation to plantation announcing the glad tidings.

Allan was fast asleep when, at 9 A.M., I visited him in the dressing-room off the bedroom allotted to me as the senior, sleeping the sleep of the "just," at five-and-twenty after a hard night. Had he dreamed of her? I trow not. To put it vulgarly, his nerves were too good for that, though I

would hazard something, that she was his latest thought. And she? I should say not either. I judged she was too unsophisticated, and that, while her senses were intoxicated with the delights of the dancing, the music, the lights, and the wondrous kaleidoscope which greeted her on every side, she was too genuinely happy to have much thought in her heart for Allan.

"Wake up, Cornet," I cried; "you've got to dress, and breakfast, and shoot, but have a good strong cup of tea first; there's lots of it about; I scent the sweet aroma gently stealing, and have heard the clink of cup and saucer passing up and down the passage."

"All right, Merrilis, I will; I feel a bit chippy; soon be all right. I wish we could have the old man's bath over here."

That day he was a little bit off his shooting, not from the effects of smoke, or dance, or late hours, though. I had seen him and Teddy, after much harder nights in town, breakfasting on strong tea, with whitings split and devilled at Limmers', as, then, they only knew how to do them, and shoot A1; and the pair were hard to beat when they shot together in a match, yet that day his thoughts seemed to wander, and several times he was not quick enough at a snap shot, or transformed an easy into a difficult one; but the next day he shot in his grandest form. The day after that was to have been our last one, but we were both much pressed to stay on, as long as we liked. Allan, however, said he must go over and see

the old man for three or four days, and that he hoped, as the frost would be quite out of the ground in a couple of days, to get in another ride with the harriers. So he departed, and I gladly elected to remain.

The morning he left I met him *en route* at a corner of the drive, and, as I stopped to bid him adieu, I recommended to him Ballycastle Church on Sunday.

"All right, old man," he cheerily replied, "I am going on supernumerary there."

CHAPTER X.

"What man dare I dare,
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear."

Now that the large party had been broken up and departed, we were reinforced by a professor or two from Queen's College, and an English politician and his wife, getting up Ireland, its history, its geography, its land tenure, and the idiosyncrasies of its people, during their tour of three weeks in the Sister Isle.

Having to draw upon my own resources a good deal during Allan's absence, I got on very good terms again with my violin, but nevertheless

looked forward with pleasure to his return as a general out-door and smoking-room companion. The day he was to come back there had been some argument at luncheon on a point of Irish history in the closing days of the last Parliament, and I had been deputed to search the annual register, and any other authorities I could, to verify the various statements. This affair had occupied me a couple of hours, and I was beginning to feel like a smoke and a walk, and therefore slipped out of the low library window on to the ground, when, to my astonishment, I perceived Allan a few yards off, looking flushed and excited, and without his hat on.* I saw there

* The incident narrated in this chapter is taken from real life, and it was Lord Ava, 17th Lancers,

was something wrong. "What is it, quick, tell me," I cried out. "Come in, let me get you something."

"Oh, no, I'm all right," he said. "I'll get a hat as we pass the hall, and I'll tell you presently. All right, don't hurry me, old chap," he again interposed, when I pressed him as to what the cause of his excitement had been; and, as we traversed the long windings of the avenue, he began to talk of his home, and his father, and his other affairs.

"And what about Miss Maitland?" I inquired. "You did the church parade, of course, and the old parson asked you into lunch; and how did you come off?"

"Oh," replied he, "she's awfully nice,

and Captain Waud, 3rd Irish Rifles, who saved Johnston from being killed by the bear at Clandeboye.

and we got on fairly well, but somehow I did not get very much out of her; you know what it is when you've got to do company to the father and mother, and there is a young sister of about eleven watching you open-mouthed and open-eyed, and taking in all you say; your remarks seem to fall flat just a bit; and then, when I did get a chance, she seemed so irresponsive, or shy, or something, and not to realise the situation, so I fairly found I had talked myself out, and was getting no assistance; you want a bit of a lead sometimes, you know; I could not get further than the ball. She would not see that I had come out to church on purpose, and that—"

"Oh, yes, I know," I interposed; "behind your conventional, go-to-church manner,

you were just like the rock in the wilderness, full of the pent-up streams of adoration, which the touch of sympathy from her wand would have loosened until they just swamped you both, my boy. Well, I'm not very sorry, Cornet; you've lots of time before you; you're much too young at present, besides which, she's got no money. And never mind," I added, "you can see her again. I should think there are not many lady-killers about the 'barren, barren moorland' and the rocks of Ballyshannon."

"Ballycastle, Merrilis, Ballycastle."

"Oh, very well, Ballycastle." But nevertheless I augured in favour of time and separation as against the golden image of Helen Maitland which he had set up, and I resolved also within myself to discourage the affair as far as possible. And she?

She had been too demurely and sedately brought up in the Vicarage at Armagh, and schooled in the schooling of Miss Edgeworth, to forego the frequent admonitions she had received about flirting with the heartless soldiery, especially the mounted branch thereof, who were popularly supposed to love and ride away. The "beware" therefore of her mother, and the instruction to exercise a proper pride, fell upon a receptive fallow, as she followed her daughter into the precincts of her chaste little room at the Rectory, and fidgetted about, touching her scent bottles, and rearranging the ornaments on her wardrobe, in the indifferent way mothers have when they intend to say something, and are debating into what words they shall put it, and are perhaps a little fearful of marring the good effect by saying just

too much, or just too little; and when besides, a little anxiety as to what the reception of their words will be perturbs them, and it was on these lines I prophesied.

Allan had been talking in, for him, a subdued and quiet tone, then, as he discussed a letter he had received from Godsal, and flitted from one subject of interest to another, he became himself again, and walked smartly out, braced and impetuous. I soon suggested a return, as it was getting dark, and, laying my hand upon his shoulder, said,—

"Now you've got to tell me what happened this afternoon."

"Well, I'll tell you, old chap," he replied. "I was very nearly seeing the other side this afternoon; I did not realise until it was all over what a near thing it had been; acted

on instinct, or whatever they call it, I suppose. Now, when I think of the old man upon the ground with his ghastly white face, and the blood flowing down his neck, when I see the great brute's red eyes, and hear his vengeful growl, just as we got the old man through the door, it quite unmans me. Well, yes," in answer to a question of mine. "You see Laud and I jumped in somehow, and got hold of the old man, and one of us kept the beast off with a pitchfork, still a terror to him from past experience, and between us we got him pushed and kicked up, and dragged, for he was too dazed to do anything for himself, up to the door, and the key out of his pocket, and well, oh yes, we just got the lot of us clear through, but it was a near thing."

"And the old man?"

"Oh, we had just left him fairly well at his cottage, and Laud was to send a surgeon to see him at once; he thought it best to catch the five train, as there was no other till after seven."

"Laud?" I asked. "Do I know him?"

"Oh, he had come over after the dance to call. I met him on the way; luncheon was over, so we had some sherry and biscuits together, and then, just for something to do, we went to see the bear."

And this was all I could draw out of Allan at the time; the rest of the story I put together afterwards, principally from the old man Johnston's account. I also met Laud subsequently, and cross-examined him on the subject. It appears Mr Stevenson had been made a present of a young bear two years before the above episode, and that the

cub had been turned loose in a large disused poultry yard, not far from the house. In the midst of it was a circular duck-pond some six yards in diameter, and which looked, as all duck ponds do, a veritable slough of despond. Here and there were what we may also call disused apple trees, for the hand of no man had plucked the fruit thereof for years, and these, until a severe fall or two nearly dislocating his shoulders had induced a prudent caution, the bear in his younger days had been in the habit of climbing. And seeing the yard in summer time, some one had euphemistically named it the "bear-garden." The walls thereof, originally of brick, had furthermore been rebuilt at a good height all round of eight or nine feet, and strongly and smoothly cemented inside, for Bruin was a clever climber, and

had once got out, to the terror of the stable boys and dairy-maids, who shut themselves up in the laundry, barricaded the windows, and shouted for aid, as is their wont so to do, meanwhile that the bear was chivying for his own amusement pure and simple, and with no further evil intent, a calf in the paddock adjoining the laundry.

The old man Johnston had been appointed groom, feeder, and general bear leader, and had, moreover, taught his *protégé* some sort of gymnastic tricks, which were wont to be witnessed by the spectators from a platform built up against the outside wall, and from which they could also feed the grisly monarch with the breakfast bannock or the succulent banana.

But the time had come when Johnston had grown reckless and over-confident. On

that very morning he had put the bear through numerous paces, and kept him over long at "attention" for the pleasure of some American tourists from Belfast, whose *largesse* he had got rid of at the neighbouring public-house, treating and being treated by some of the keepers still in funds from the recent shoot. So it was with an extra degree of assurance that he marched in, pitchfork in hand, and ordered Bruin about while MacDonagh and Laud looked on from the platform.

Matters progressed well enough till the old man accidentally or intentionally struck the bear upon the softer part of the paws with the sharp-pointed pitchfork, and then he imagines that the animal stepping forward merely intended to dash the pitchfork out of his hand, and disarm him of the dreaded

weapon ; but struck him at the same time about the arm and head, yet with no further force than to knock him down and stun him, then, standing over him, he had just got the back part of his head in his mouth, seeing his enemy on the ground, when MacDonagh with a shout, cried out, "My God ! the bear will kill him," and, turning his head to Laud as he leapt over the low wall from the platform into the yard below, "Will you come ?" There was no time to make reply, and, with a shout Laud also leapt down.

Their cries, and their sudden charge towards him, confused the bear, and, as with lightning rapidity MacDonagh seized the pitchfork and stood over Johnston, the animal turned and retreated several paces, uncertain what to do.

"Get out the key, pull him away," shouted

Allan. "Quick, quick," back-kicking Johnston in the ribs and sides to rouse him, more keenly than he had ever kicked at football in the Eton playing fields, while Laud, but little assisted by the dazed and semi-conscious Johnston, sought for, discovered, and drew out the key from the warder's pocket. Allan, with his left hand on Johnston's breast, still faced the bear, moving backwards, and Laud, half supporting the old man, with a convulsive effort pulled him to the door. It was only a second or two at most that they escaped and lived, for, after slinking away, the bear turned round, raised himself slowly, and, as the blood about his nostrils maddened him, made for his adversaries with a growl of fury and vengeance of which he was only baulked by the mercy of God.

CHAPTER XI.

"Now by two-headed Janus
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time."

It will be advisable now without further delay to introduce to the reader Matthew O'Halloran, one who played an important part in the sequel of this memoir. Half dealer, half tout, messenger, commissioner, and general hanger-on to the Black Horse, with all his roguery, real or exaggerated, Mat O'Halloran had his good points, his *esprit de corps*, his willingness to oblige where it cost nothing, and at this period a certain code of honesty and morality at which he drew the line. Few cavalry regiments are with-

out these hangers-on; they have perhaps belonged to the regiment at one time or another, and been kept on afterwards as a servant by one of the officers, or in some other useful capacity. Partiality for the old corps, or want of originality, has caused them to gravitate into, as I heard Mat once describe himself, the regimental man. With brains they make a good thing of it; without, they degenerate into hewers of wood and drawers of water, possibly cutters of hair and cleaners of boots to some swagger troop. Certainly Mat O'Halloran was of the former lot.

In appearance, and to those who did not know him, he might have belonged to any one of three or four classes of the community; it depended upon the day you saw him, and the job he was

upon. Thermometer like, his get-up gave the clue to his manœuvres. We talked of him as wearing his swagger suit, or his fatigue suit, or his Stiggins suit. Let us take him first as he stands in his Stiggins suit. To begin with, he wears a tall, silk, dull black hat, with broad flat brim, stuck rather on the back of his head, but not concealing his crisp and curly red brown hair, nevertheless kept closely cropped, while his short red whiskers are trimmed in the old-fashioned Wellington style. He has a ruddy complexion, and rather small black-brown eyes, which twinkle with roguery; his griping mouth, with its gleaming row of white, short, regular teeth, completes the picture of his face. Round a large and badly-starched white collar he wears

twice round a black silk neckerchief twisted into a bow. He adopts an open shirt, a dark-coloured waistcoat, and an old-fashioned black swallow-tailed coat of strong material, and with outside pockets, from one of which there always protrudes a red pocket handkerchief. Dark grey pepper-and-salt trousers and highlows complete this suit, and thus arrayed you might take him for a retired shopkeeper, a baptist minister, or even a country doctor; but it was in this suit that he perpetrated most of his iniquities, and also did penance for the same, when the crime was venial, or those concerned could be "squared" or arranged with. It was in this suit that he did commissions on the turf, procured information for his patrons,

visited dealers' stables, and arranged with shady characters for pigeon matches, horse trials, or a badger hunt. It was thus he was wont to attend as a sort of bookmaker, cup-bearer, valet and what not to Teddy Burton at Hurlingham. His swagger suit was the one he usually went about in, viz., a rather slightly worn white hat, the ditto in shape of the black one, while the neckerchief was of a dull red, and the coat and waistcoat of a dark green, such as is worn with harriers, cut, however, the same as the black one, but mounted with the gilt regimental buttons he had picked up at various times from the officers; cords and gaiters, with thick, determined-looking boots, were the complement of the swagger suit.

And it was thus accoutred you generally beheld him in barracks, on the parade ground, at the nearer meets of hounds, big field days, or on the line of march.

His fatigue suit differed only from the last two in that the black hat was smooth, and limp, and shabby, the coat and vest of coarse, rough material, which always looked dirty and well-worn; here the linen was soiled, and the cords, with which he wore Irish long grey stockings and brogues, had an unstrung, uncared-for appearance. For his Stiggins suit, he carried a large and duly knotted blackthorn. In his swagger suit, he affected a thick but pliable cane, suitable for foot or mounted purposes; in his fatigues, he was never without a good ash-plant; and it was in these habiliments he did business on his own account, went

over on what he called his furlough to his brother cattle jobbers in Ireland. It was thus he sneaked off early to Lincoln or Horncastle to pick up, with the assistance of the "tribe," a screw that might possibly pass as a second charger, and on which, if sold as a "trapper," he could not lose. In the "fatigues," he frequently went to Dublin, or York, or Limerick, to deliver or bring back valuable hunters, for the "convoying" of which their masters could not spare another servant; and finally, it was in this suit that he marketed for the messman, from buying a cow to haggling over fowls, and sampling butter.

Mat O'Halloran was an institution in the regiment, and he knew it. Joining in 1846, he shortly afterwards became second servant to Sir Harry Darell, and it was from his

clever stud groom he imbibed that early knowledge of horse-flesh, and those tastes for betting and horse coping, that eventually proved his ruin.

Of the regiment and its sayings and doings he was a walking encyclopedia; he could tell you of that famous foxhunt, when he was riding second horseman to Sir Harry—(for as an Irish lad he had learnt to ride well and was then a light weight) and of the attack made by the Caffirs on them as they swept through their huts.

Of the latter days he could give you anecdotes of the regiment at Brighton under that *Beau Sabreur*, Colonel Ainslie, the mad pranks of the officers there, intermingled with accounts of sporting matches, shoots, and steeplechases. He had forgotten nothing; he called to mind that flyer of the

hunt, that Orlando mare that broke down and lost the regiment a mint of money, that officer who had fought the duel, or that one who, after going through ten thousand a year, had ended his days at Boulogne; nothing had escaped him. Arrived at strange quarters, it was he who at once informed you of the best places to send on to for the meet; where you had better get your forage, and what sort of country it was; he knew the picked farm where your own or some other cavalry regiment had held their annual steeplechases, and what was the disposition of the farmers towards a regimental pack of harriers, or larking across country.

But if he was found useful and entertaining in barracks and on the line of march,

it was when out with a flying column that his services were most appreciated. About noon, and just when you least expected him, and were perhaps most starved with cold on a raw September day, or parched with thirst after a long and circuitous ride to attack the enemy on the flank, he would turn up with a borrowed dog-cart or mess-trap, and dispense to you hot Irish stew, or produce from its caverns cool bottles of beer or of champagne. He had probably been up in the camping ground before any one else that morning, could tell the quartermaster exactly what was the best situation for officers and men to have their tents pitched in, and where the horses could be most advantageously picketed. More than likely he had already posted the little red and black flag to denote the quarters of the

Black Horse, and he seldom failed to secure them, though sometimes the staff officer would be obdurate in favour of some other regiment, or sometimes a divisional order could not be superseded. If you wanted a couple more blankets from barracks, or a special message by hand sent, or the country scoured at dawn for more eggs and bacon or fowls and butter, Mat O'Halloran was the man to do it. He was also, I fear rightly, suspected of giving information to his particular corps, and hints about the movements of the enemy, hints which, unfortunately, from the positive issue of the morning's divisional orders, they were unable to avail themselves of; but, nevertheless, sometimes the "tip" came off. On these occasions he wore the Stiggins suit; he said it made him less observable, and,

with a rug over his knees and his collar turned up, less likely to be spotted when contravening the rules of the campaign.

In a similar fashion on the line of march he was equally to the front, and on these occasions he wore the swagger suit, and drove or rode resplendent, while the gilded buttons of his dark green coat used to shine in the morning sun.

It was amidst these scenes of mimic warfare that the best side of Mat O'Halloran came out, and given that he had not at the time transgressed the eighth or other Commandment flagrantly, it was Mat this and Mat that. What a good fellow Mat is! What a lot of *esprit de corps* he has, and there is no trouble too great for him! ("exes," let it be remembered, being paid, and that on a liberal scale). But it was in the

betting and horse-dealing transactions that he showed the seamy side. In the perquisites he took and received between officer and dealer; in the vamped-up animals he managed to foist on the unsuspecting Cornet, contrary to the advice of his Captain; in the use and abuse he made of racing information, and in the manner he conducted the commissions often entrusted to him by the officers from sheer idleness. "Mat was going up to town, and would find out all about it," they said; it was so much easier to deliver a verbal message to Mat, as you were hurrying off to a field day, than to write a note or send a telegram, and wait the reply that you were to act on. Often found out, more often suspected, and having just enough by him to square the Nemesis of the time being, as far as his

irretrievable expulsion from barracks went, Mat lived a charmed life. If forage bills for goods delivered and ordered by Mat were inconceivably wrong, or cooked, Mat had generally enough at his back to arrange with the contractor, or cunning enough, aided by the faulty memory and badly-kept accounts of captains as well as subalterns, to see himself through.

He had been entrusted with bets he never put on, but as the horse or horses usually did not win, that seldom affected him. Once or twice he had found himself in a hole; and once or twice a bookmaker, with whom he had entrusted the money or commission, had, according to his plausible tale, broken and fled to France, or died of drink or heart disease. Found out in a fraud, or complained of by one of the younger officers,

he was generally sent for to "the office," and, appearing in the Stiggins suit, waited, chatting with the rest of the prisoners outside, until he was called in. To have his "name put on the gate" was, of course, the worst punishment that could be meted out to him; but then there was the alternative of migrating to out-quarters, or *vice versa*, and turning up there smiling with the latest news of hunters arrived, chargers "cast," balls in preparation, and what not; and there he would live in temporary retreat until his sentence had expired, or the next regimental move was made. Once he disappeared, *flagrante delicto*, for nearly a year; but I think that, on that occasion, he was more frightened than hurt, or, rather, knew more than his judges did. As a civilian, of course, no defaulter-sheet re-

corded his villanies; but had one, or rather several, of them existed, you might have turned them over and selected at random passages such as these,—

(He had come home from India in 1865 and had been discharged at Canterbury, and therein commenced his career as the regimental man.)

"*Canterbury*, 1865. — Drunk and disorderly in barracks, and resisting the provo. Severely reprimanded, and his name to be put on the gate for two months.

"Giving false description and character of a horse to Cornet Johnson. Ordered to take back the same, and refund the price to Cornet Johnson pending further proceedings."

"*Colchester*, 1868.—Being against orders

in the officers' mess quarters, and having in his possession a half bottle of champagne for which he was unable to account. Sentenced to have his name put on the gate for one month."

And so the record would have run on.

Altogether, he was the most trusted and mistrusted man in the regiment. Had he been a bold speculator, or had he had a head for figures, he would have amassed money, but he had not.

CHAPTER XII.

"Go, strip him, lad; now, sir, I think you'll declare
Such a picture you never set eyes on before."

"Is that Tattersall's list you have got there, Peter?" queried Captain Watson one morning, himself a fine rider, a good soldier, and an Irish gentleman of small estate, to Lieutenant Peter Godsall, better known as "the Squire."

"No, it's Sewell's."

"Well, then, if you are on 'the buy,' you'd better let me stand in and do the bargaining and betting for you; that sale will just fit in nicely with Punchestown, and you pay the exes. Recollect the 'roarer' you bought from the doctor."

The Squire was a burly, good-natured soul, whose chief aim and object in life was to live up to the form of the regiment. If it fell short in the matter of "form" in any particular line, he would quote what he thought it ought to be, taking pattern from the King's Hussars, or the "Green Horse;" but he himself would never set the Thames on fire, or become a judge of horse-flesh. Money he had, and spent it, and he was of a good old Shropshire family. Now, Captain Watson would have liked very muchly to have got his exes. out of Peter John with Punchestown thrown in, say a tenner for the job, all on the "square," for Watson was a strictly honourable man, and would have studied and carried out the lieutenant's interest to a successful issue. But the Squire was always now a trifle suspicious in matters of horse-

flesh, having been done in a gentlemanly way not once or twice by his brother officers already; therefore he was obdurate, and thought he knew better. So it was decided that he should write over to Hartington in Dublin, the regimental dealer, and ask him to take a run up to Drogheda, and there vet and give his opinion on a certain brown horse. The Squire had been over in Ireland the year before, and, while staying in the neighbourhood of Drogheda, on sporting fare intent, had observed during a run, of which he never saw the end, a big, raw, ragged-hipped, unfinished four-year-old, going well in front with a fair turn of speed, and, in spite of some mistakes and bungling, making some great "lepping;" but, then, he was being steered by Ker of the Royals, the best heavy-weight rider in the north of Ireland

(and in a great many other places too), who had been given the mount by his cheery friend and host John Lyndsay to help to make the young one. This was the animal that was to be sold at Sewell's, with some others from the same stud, unless previously disposed of by private contract. Said the Squire,—

"We are going to Leeds and Birmingham in October, and I shall want a good doer in Warwickshire or Yorkshire, if not a couple more, and I ought to get this animal at a reasonable figure."

Peter was not averse to a bargain either.

A few days later came the answer, that the horse had been examined, schooled, and approved of, and that the upset price, the very lowest was one hundred and thirty sovs., Mr Lyndsay averring that, having parted already with one, he would be

breaking his sale at the last moment in Dublin by just sending up two—the worst, of course.

The bargain being made, next came the question of (*a*) his letting the horse come over by himself, for Mr Lyndsay had wired, —"Send over; I do not deliver;" (*b*) sending over his own groom, or his second servant on pass; (*c*) ascertaining if Mat O'Halloran was free to follow his fortunes, or if he was engaged in some scheme or enterprise by one of the other officers, and sending him over. The first alternative was never entertained for a moment; the second was discussed between the Squire and Jim Miller, his stud-groom, as follows:—

"Jim, you will have to go over by Greenore and fetch me back a brown horse from Banbridge. I bought him yesterday;

saw him last winter with a big man on him; he's a real clinker. You'd had better come back by Belfast, better boats, and more convenient." Peter always started with the fictitious idea that he had, and meant to have, his own way in the stable management.

"Well, Captain," said Jim in answer—Jim always called him Captain, Peter liked it, and there was a sort of tacit understanding between them about it—"you know I don't object myself; there is nothing I would not do to oblige you; sure I'm cleaning your breeches and tops, Captain, which it's the duty of your first servant to do, and I'm waiting always dressed at luncheon when you have ladies to your rooms. No, Captain, it's not the journey I mind, but who's to look after your horses

if I go away, and you having such a chance with them for the Regimental Cup and Hunters' Stakes? Some one that understands the business must attend to them for sure, and I get little or no work out of your second servant Steele, Captain. Sure, though it's against the regimental orders, Mr Davidson has the 'saving clause' in for all his own parades, mounted or foot, 'second servants to attend,' and he likes well them foot parades, the Adjutant does, and repeats them often, he does, and and it's some days, Captain, divil the sight I have of Steele till evening stables. The Adjutant has him for this, and the sergeant-major takes him away for that; but he'd get drunk anyways, and maybe be took up by the provo in Belfast, and where would we be, getting an official letter about him, or

maybe a telegram at the back end of the week to send over an escort for him, to convoy him over here a prisoner? No, Captain, if ye'll be guided by me, ye'll just send Mat O'Halloran over for the horse, not that I'd trust him further nor I could see him in the matter of a deal, but this here is plain sailing."

The amendment was therefore carried *nem. con.*, and Mat O'Halloran received his "sailing orders."

Perceive, then, about two o'clock on a fine afternoon towards the end of April, Mat O'Halloran mounted on what appeared to be a slashing brown horse, picking his way along the muddy and slippery streets of Belfast towards the suburban quarters of Richard M'Goveney, dealer. Covered, as the quadruped was, with rug and hood, and with his

knee-caps on, while his thick, coarse tail was straw plaited, it was little you could make of him; however, you saw something, and that pleased you; you guessed the rest, building up a structure of shape, make, and quality, with little more to go upon than had Professor Owen when he built up the structure of the megatherium from a few fossil bones. With the aid of Lyndsay's helper Mat had had him thus arrayed, in the toilette appropriate to steam-boat and horse box, and if he was to be "dressed" again, it was not by Mat's hands that it would be done.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Between two horses which doth bear him best."

RICHARD M'GOVENEY was a little fat, round-about man, with sandy hair and complexion, and short trimmed whiskers; a clean-shaved mouth and chin, and a sharp straight nose, showing, however, the red danger-flag associated with spirits at the end of it. He affected a very clean, half-sporting kit, which could have been worn in any rank, surmounted by a neat and black pot hat. He might have passed in the streets for a sharp man of business of horsey propensities, had not his yellow foxy eyes "given him away."

Dick never threw his leg over a quadruped of any sort now. He was a keen judge, standing on the flags, or pacing the spongy meadows belonging to some dealing farmer; the rest he did through his trusted headman, or from the cushions of his little roundabout gig, seated on which he was a regular attendant at all the near meets of the County Down Staghounds, dispensing even wonderful liqueurs and well-made sandwiches to cold and hungry sportsmen. And, what with his quick-trotting thoroughbred, and knowledge of the lanes and cross roads, he often saw as much of the hounds as some of the hunt themselves.

With this he had the name of being a jolly fellow, and lived up to it. After the first greetings had been passed, it was Mat was waiting for Dick to ask him what he

had got there, and it was Dick was waiting for Mat to blurt out the job he was on. But the difficulty was solved by Dick asking Mat to just go on into the "parlour," where he would find a hot leg of mutton and potatoes, and he would be with him in a minute, when he had seen after the horse. Now, the steamboat to Greenore had not agreed with Mat, and he had had on arrival little or no time for breakfast at Banbridge —just enough to look at it, get the horse dressed, and catch the Belfast train. Therefore was he nothing loth when pressed by Dick just to take a "half-one" raw before commencing, and a good stiff one during dinner, of "old Comber."

"And now," said Dick, when he perceived that Mat was no longer bolting his food, and had settled down into a steady

pace of eating and drinking, "Where are ye from, and what are ye after?"

"From the Moy," said Mat.

"Well, I didn't see you there," said Dick; "I was home from there yesterday myself."

"No more didn't I see you," responded Mat; "and me on the streets all day." Both were bluffing. Dick himself had not been there at all. He saw that Mat was, for some reason or other, "contrairy," and waited for the statement he knew would come in time, true or false. Rising at length, with the remark that Mat could hardly be warmed through yet, and that he would see if his horse had been wisped over, he rang the bell for Martha, and ordered up more whisky and hot water, and by the time he had returned, found that Mat had "mixed," and had stretched his

legs before the fire, having removed himself into an arm-chair. The statement was not long in coming. It was not exactly premeditated; but the father of lies must have suggested it to Mat, and full of self-confidence and whisky hot, he took it.

"Well, it's just my own horse, and I'll keep you no longer in the dark," volunteered the regimental man; for having peddled long, so to speak, in horses, he caught at the bait of appearing to own a really good one, and he was judge enough to fancy that he had been riding something particularly good that day. It was mere swagger on his part, but he stuck to his guns boldly, giving many reasons for his purchase, that he had won a bit of money racing, that the owner was selling off in a hurry, and that his Cousin Mick had given

him the straight tip, etc., etc. The ownership having been acknowledged and acquiesced in, it was now Dick's turn; and the horse that Mat had been riding, "Montalto by Minstrel," was exactly the horse he wanted for a Scotch customer, a welter weight, and a man who gave long prices and to whom he was about to despatch one of very similar appearance, viz., Derryboye, and got, moreover, by the same sire; but while Derryboye was out of a clean bred harness mare, Montalto was out of that fine old hunting mare of Captain MacFarlane's, well known with the Wards, and over the pastures of Royal Meath. In his visit to the stable, Dick had recognised the quod as one he had often seen carry Mr Lyndsay splendidly at the latter end of the season, as long as the stag-

hounds remained in sight, or could be viewed from the cushions of his little gig, as he nicked in at some cross road, and he coveted him accordingly. A less astute dealer, a gentleman certainly, would have commenced by crabbing Montalto; not so, however, did Dick M'Goveney. After revolving the matter in his fertile brain, he spread the net that should eventually land Montalto in one of his own warm stalls.

It was by praising Mat and his judgment in picking up such an excellent quod that he began; then here and there by criticising that point, and much misdoubting this or that quality, he managed adroitly to take the gilt from off the gingerbread, concluding by averring that he possessed a faster, a cleverer, and a better bred one by the

same sire in his own stable, and so like outside, that he would bet Mat a sov. he would not know the difference, each having only a sheet on; at any rate he should come and see his clipper in the stall. That there was an extraordinary resemblance between them, Mat at once acknowledged, and without going into all the details in which they resembled and differed from each other, and which an owner of both might have discussed on a Sunday afternoon at Stables, or over the walnuts and wine, suffice it to say that granting the great similarity, the points of difference lay mainly in the inherent excellence of the one over the other.

The dealer's horse, Derryboye, was the darker in colour of the two, his coat was finer and more silky; being the taller and

lengthier, he showed more daylight; to a novice he looked the better bred one, and as if, of the Leicestershire stamp, he could have galloped away from the other; there was no apparent reason why he should not have been "a performer," but he had not the clean flat legs or the great hindquarters of his *confrère* in the next stall, who, on shorter limbs, stood nearly as high, sufficiently so for them both to be described as about sixteen hands, and who, with a deeper chest, a shorter barrel, looked a stayer all over. Both were equally chronicled as five years old, with stars upon their foreheads. But while Montalto had been carefully schooled, and successfully ridden to hounds, Derryboye had been neither the one nor the other. He had been handed as a three-year-old over to the mercies of a drunken

travelling trainer, who had once had the name of being first rate, and who, drunk or sober, would get up upon anything foaled, that is, if he had been previously "primed."

Jo Dawson's experience had lain almost entirely amongst the half-bred and ill-fed horses of small farmers, and this son of Minstrel had nearly proved too much for him, getting rid of him once or twice, and at other times requiring of necessity to be given in to when the priming process had gone too far to allow of a successful fight on his, the trainer's, part, so he handed him over with his temper completely spoilt. He would generally go well enough on the roads or with another horse alongside, and there he was at his best, and seldom showed the "cloven foot."

Jo and the groom had taught him the rudiments, but they did not consist of much more than getting over six or seven easy fences of sorts, and those, too, led by his stable companion on the way to and fro from the castle meadows, where there was some fine galloping ground.

But the hunting season was commencing, and his owner's son, just fresh from Oxford, was resolved to show him hounds, and to go in front with them too. With the first day's hunting, troubles and difficulties arose; the Oxonian found him a handful, and something very different from the straight-going seasoned hunters he had hired from Charley Symond's or Jo Tollet's yards. The troubles and difficulties did not end until he had been "passed on." Sometimes he would go for a mile or two pretty well, when he was

in company, and fences were propitious, and then you fancied that for once he was going to give you a good day by way of a change ; then, perhaps, if he was disappointed of his place, and kept waiting, or if you had to turn him round from an awkward flax hole lying at the far side of a fence, and take him elsewhere, he invariably refused, and, by vigorous signs and tokens, asserted that he infinitely preferred jumping into the flax hole, and that nothing on earth would induce him to "offer" at any other place. Walk up to an awkward fence he never would. So he was "passed on," and after similar performances in the hands of two other gentlemen, who were morally certain that their predecessors in ownership had treated him wrongly, he found himself in the hands of Dick M'Goveney at a reduced

price the succeeding winter, who also erred in imagining that the evil habits contracted could be permanently cured by his particular system.

Far from it; they had now become ingrained. Various severe lickings had only further spoilt his nerves, and he had become more useless to buy. Twice had M'Goveney lent him out with the option of a buy, and twice had he returned to him unbought; the horse's credit was blown upon in the north, and it would be useless to send him up to Sewell's, where he would be certainly "spotted" by some of the northern division. There remained only to sell him as a hunter at the Dublin horse show to the Saxon, when the opportune order arrived from Mr Baird for three or four trappers of different sorts and that if there was anything like a good-

looking one to hack for a few months, and that was a good hunter, too, he would not mind another. Behind M'Goveney's premises lay three or four small fields, separated by easy fences from each other, and at right angles to them were constructed a "double," a small water jump, and a low stone wall. These fields were designated by M'Goveney "the home farm," and it was here that, by bitter experience imparted to him, Derryboye understood that the fences were fairly easy, and that it was better to do them at once than offer any futile opposition.

The examination and mutual appraisement of the two browns having gone on until each of our worthies opined that he had said just enough and not too much, Dick M'Goveney, whose yellow eyes had roved from the horses to Mat, and from

Mat to the horses, while scheme after scheme, and alternative after alternative lay before him, proposed, in an off-hand sort of way, that Mat should see Derryboye lepped and galloped, adding that the afternoon was young yet; and he thereupon inveigled him into another stable, "just to look over one or two late arrivals from Roscommon," while he answered an "important business letter," in what he called his office—in reality to give the orders to, and lay down a strict programme for, his satellites to follow. Arrived on the scene of action, the great brown had almost started in a fast canter — pulling at his bridle and shaking his head in a sort of "why don't you let me go" way—while, fifty yards in front of him, ridden by stable-boy No. 2, there galloped, as if casually, a

rather varminty-looking grey hunter, whose short-docked tail and much-cropped mane, and various blemishes behind and before, portrayed that he had done the state some service, and probably often been up for sale. Starting to the right hand, one or two places are easily done—the brown horse palpably rushing them, and quickening rather more than less until he reaches his companion's girths, when they take the well-known fences that are left together; once round has now been accomplished, and as they get towards the centre of the circle, from which there is a straight run home, they turn at a slower pace, stable-boy No. 2 gradually dropping behind and pulling off; the low stone wall is easily accomplished, and the water at a fly, but nearing the double the great galloper seems to go

shorter, and plant his feet a bit, just hesitate a little, as if he missed his stable companion, and was not quite sure of his mind, but a vigorous reminder from the spurs of his rider, well sent home, and the sight of satellite No. 3 in his dirty, braceless shirt, armed with something that reminded him of an ash plant, settled the question, and the double is negotiated with something of a scramble, and the stable-yard reached at a trot.

The scene is again shifted to the parlour, and a final "mixing" is inaugurated. Mat denotes a proclivity for cigars in preference to pipes, and Dick unlocks a drawer in which a packet of the same lie concealed amidst special letters, bills, and a roll of bank notes and gold, which he takes good care that Mat shall see. It would be

tedious to relate how Dick just offered to buy Montalto straight, and how Mat (naturally), refusing anything but a price he knew would not be offered, played the game of brag until a hint of an exchange, with £10 thrown in, was just dropped like the flavouring suspicion of vanilla is by a skilful *chef* into some culinary triumph. Mat metaphorically smelled the bait, but would have none of it; but it was there, and he sniffed again—the cash-box was hard by, and the punch had made him rash—so it came about that Montalto went to Scotland, and Dick took the other brown to Aldershot, with half-a-dozen five-pound notes and ten good sovs. in the spacious pockets of his fatigue suit, while Dick M'Goveney locked up with the cigars, the balance of the cash, and his other important documents,

a receipt from Mat O'Halloran for forty pounds, part price of a brown horse by Minstrel, sixteen hands, and five years old, etc., duly dated and signed.

END OF VOL. I.

COLSTON AND COMPANY, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.